

**To My Grandmother Saide,  
My Mother Sevgi  
and My Brother Ayhan**

**TURKISH-IRANIAN RELATIONS AFTER 1990**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The changes in the early 1990s at the international, regional and domestic levels made it inevitable to study Turkish-Iranian relations separately after 1990. This study categorizes the relations into bilateral issues, regional issues and economic relations. Turkish-Iranian relations have a multi-dimensional structure and there were ups and downs in the course of the relations through the 1990s. The relations continued on an uncertain ground. Looking to the future, there are incentives for cooperation on the one hand and obstacles to cooperation on the other.

## ÖZET

1990'ların başındaki uluslar arası ve bölgesel seviyedeki ve iki ülke içindeki gelişmeler Türk-İran ilişkilerini 1990 sonrası ayrıca incelemeyi kaçınılmaz kılmaktadır. Bu çalışma ilişkileri ikili konular, bölgesel konular ve ekonomik ilişkiler olmak üzere kategorize ederek inceler. Türk-İran ilişkileri çok yönlü bir yapıya sahiptir ve ilişkilerin seyrinde 1990'lar boyunca iniş ve çıkışlar görülmüştür. İlişkiler belirsiz bir zemin üzerinde devam etmiştir. Geleceğe baktığımızda bir tarafta işbirliği için güdüleyici sebepler mevcutken diğer tarafta engeller bulunmaktadır.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
ÖZET.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONS.....	4
1.1. Understanding Iranian Foreign Policy.....	4
<i>1.1.1. Institutions which shape Iranian Foreign Policy.....</i>	4
<i>1.1.2. Principles and Objectives of Iranian Foreign Policy.....</i>	6
<i>1.1.3. From Khomeini to Khatemi: Change in Iranian Foreign Policy.....</i>	7
1.2. Understanding Turkish Foreign Policy.....	11
<i>1.2.1. Institutions which shape Turkish Foreign Policy.....</i>	11
<i>1.2.2. Foreign Policy of the Turkish Republic.....</i>	12
1.3. A Brief Historical Background of Turkish-Iranian Relations	14
1.4. What Changed in the 1990s effecting Turkish-Iranian Relations?.....	16
<i>1.4.1. Global Changes.....</i>	16
<i>1.4.2. Regional Changes.....</i>	17
<i>1.4.3. Domestic Changes.....</i>	18
CHAPTER 2: BILATERAL ISSUES.....	20
2.1. Iran's Aim of Exporting the Islamic Regime and	

Assassination Crises in Turkey.....	20
2.2. The Kurdish Issue, Border Problems and the PKK.....	33
2.3. Iranian Regime opponents in Turkey.....	41
CHAPTER 3: REGIONAL ISSUES.....	44
3.1. Turkish-Iranian Rivalry and Cooperation in the Caucasus and Central Asia.....	44
3.2. The Effects of Turkish-Israeli Military Cooperation.....	53
3.3. Iran's Armament Program: Missiles and Nuclear Weaponization.....	57
CHAPTER 4: ECONOMIC RELATIONS.....	62
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUDING REMARKS: OBSTACLES TO AND INCENTIVES FOR COOPERATION.....	72
5.1. Obstacles to Cooperation.....	72
5.1.1. <i>The US Factor</i> .....	72
5.1.2. <i>Ideological Differences</i> .....	74
5.1.3. <i>Clash of Interests</i> .....	79
5.2. Incentives for Cooperation.....	81
5.2.1. <i>The end of Conflicts</i> .....	81
5.2.2. <i>Harmony of Interests</i> .....	83
5.2.3. <i>Failure of the American Approach and Following the European Path</i> .....	85
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	93



## **CHAPTER 1**

### **UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF RELATIONS**

This chapter will give some basic information for the readers who are not familiar with the topic. Foreign policies of Iran and Turkey will be explained along with their institutions in policy making, as well as basic determinants and the historical development of their foreign policies. Then, historical development of Turkish-Iranian relations till the 1990s will be summarized in the following parts. This will constitute a background, which will help better understand the period after 1990. Finally, changes in the early 1990s, which effect the relations of the two countries, will be explained. These changes led to the significance of examining Turkish-Iranian relations separately after 1990.

#### **1.1. Understanding Iranian Foreign Policy**

##### **1.1.1. Institutions which shape Iranian Foreign Policy**

In order to understand Iranian foreign policy, it should be better to begin with analyzing the institutions which play a role in decision making. This analysis shows the plurality of these institutions, which makes it harder to understand and make predictions about Iranian foreign policy. These institutions are as follows:

a) The Constitution: Iranian constitution draws the main lines of the principles and objectives of Iranian foreign policy. Chapter 10 of the Iranian constitution

deals with the foreign policy principles of the Islamic Republic. The Iranian constitution rejects any form of domination, any foreign control over the country, suggests non-alignment with respect to the superpowers, supports the struggle of the oppressed nations against hegemons, and is concerned with the Muslim populations all over the world.<sup>1</sup>

b. The Supreme Leader: The leader is always effective in foreign policy formulation of Iran despite the decline of his power after the death of Ayetollah Khomeini.<sup>2</sup> His rights and duties were mentioned in the constitution as delineation of general policies of the Islamic Republic, supervision of the proper execution of laws, supreme command of the armed forces and declaration of war and peace.<sup>3</sup> The leadership affects foreign policy making through its dominant power over the Expediency Council and the Experts Assembly.<sup>4</sup>

c. The Government: The government in Iran is composed of the president, the council of ministers and the Supreme Council for National Security (NSC). The president has a privileged role and became more effective in foreign policy with amendments to the constitution after the death of Khomeini in 1989. NSC aims to provide cooperation between different institutions of foreign policy decision making.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See articles 152, 153, 154, 155 in Iran Constitution: p.39 ; available from <http://www.aghayan.com.html>; Internet; accessed 23 April 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Ramazan Kılınç, “Iran Dış Politikasının Evrimi: Körfezde Arap-Iran İlişkileri Örneği” *Liberal Düşünce* (2001): p.165.

<sup>3</sup> Iran Constitution, p.30.

<sup>4</sup> Jalil Roshendal, “Iran’s Foreign and Security Policies” *Security Dialogue* 31, no.1. (2000) : p.106. Experts Assembly interprets the constitution and elects the president. Expediency Council has a conciliatory role between the parliament and Guardians Council.

<sup>5</sup> Kılınç, p.165.

d. The Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majlis): According to article 84 of the constitution every representative has the right to express his views on all external affairs of the country.<sup>6</sup> The role of the Assembly decreased since most of its rights were given to the president after amendments to the constitution in 1989.<sup>7</sup>

e. The Foreign Ministry: It functions as an office, which has a role both in making and implementing foreign policy decisions in accordance with the guidance of the above mentioned institutions.<sup>8</sup>

## 2.2. Principles and Objectives of Iranian Foreign Policy

The main principles and objectives of Iran were summarized in Article 152 of the Constitution:

The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based upon the rejection of all forms of domination, both the exertion of it and submission to it, the preservation of the independence of the country in all respects and its territorial integrity, the defense of the rights of all Muslims, non-alignment with respect to the hegemonic superpowers, and the maintenance of mutually peacefully relations with all non-belligerent States.<sup>9</sup>

Post revolutionary Iran aimed firstly to provide for the territorial integrity and political independence of the Islamic Republic. The Islamic Republic

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<sup>6</sup> Iran Constitution, p.25.

<sup>7</sup> Kılınç, p.166.

<sup>8</sup> Roshendal, p.106.

<sup>9</sup> Iran Constitution, p.39.

rejected any superpower domination and intervention. The presence of any foreign military base in Iran was forbidden in the constitution.<sup>10</sup> The US and Israel have always been potential threats. The US military presence in the Persian Gulf is defined as foreign occupation and is regarded as the main source of instability in the region. Accordingly, the vital interests of the US prevail over what is best for the region.<sup>11</sup>

The Islamic Republic insisted on a Muslim identity and was concerned about the rights of Muslims not only in Iran but also all over the world. The Iranian revolution was not seen bound only with Iran but there was also a policy to export the revolution. This was precisely mentioned in the preamble to the constitution:

The Constitution, having regard to the Islamic contents of the Iranian Revolution, which was a movement for the victory of all the oppressed over the arrogant, provides a basis for the continuation of that revolution both inside and outside the country. It particularly tries to do this in developing international relations with other Islamic movements and peoples, so as to prepare the way towards a united single world community.<sup>12</sup>

### 2.3. From Khomeini to Khatemi: Change in Iranian Foreign Policy

Khomeini, as the leader of the revolution, followed hard line policies in the 1980s with the popular support of the revolutionary generation in Iran.

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<sup>10</sup> See Article 146 of Iran Constitution, p.38.

<sup>11</sup> Mohammad Larijani, "Iran's Foreign Policy: Principles and Objectives" *The Iranian Journal Of International Affairs* 7, no.4. (1996): p.759-763 and Abbas Maleki, "The Islamic Republic of Iran's Foreign Policy: The View from Iran," *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs* 7, no.4. (1996):p.753.

<sup>12</sup> Iran Constitution, p.5.

Khomeini described his policy as ‘Neither West nor East’<sup>13</sup> and isolated Iran from the world community. This policy created enemies for Iran both from the West and the East. He called the US the ‘Great Satan’ and strained the relations with the US. On the other hand, his description of the Iranian revolution as a starting point<sup>14</sup> and his willingness to spread it to other Muslim countries made the Muslim populated countries worry about Iran’s intervention in their internal affairs.

When Hashemi Rafsanjani came to power in 1989, Iranian economy was seriously affected by the long Iran-Iraq war (1981-1988). Therefore, Rafsanjani gave priority to recover the economy. Instead of idealistic policies aiming to export the revolution, Rafsanjani and his colleagues believed that Iran should be a ‘model’ for other Islamic countries by successfully establishing its Islamic system in Iran on social, economic and political structures.<sup>15</sup> He understood that economic recovery could not succeed with the policy of isolation. He abandoned the radicals’ concept of Islamic economics and resumed ties with the International Monetary Fund, borrowed from the World Bank and implemented economic reforms recommended by those organizations.<sup>16</sup> There emerged two dominant groups effecting Iranian foreign policy: Radicals and moderates. Radicals insisted on continuing the hard line policies of Khomeini, while moderates emphasized the requests of people for development and participation, and integrating to the world

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<sup>13</sup> Roshendal, p.107.

<sup>14</sup> İhsan D. Dağı, *Ortadoğu’da İslam ve Siyaset*. (İstanbul: Boyut Kitapları,1998), p.74.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.77.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Pipes and Patrick Clawson, “Ambitious Iran, Troubled Neighbors” *Foreign Affairs* 72, iss.1 (1993-1994) : p.2.

economy. The direction of foreign policy followed a dual path, which shifted from one to another.

The factors led to the new approaches in the foreign policy of the 1990s can be summarized as global and internal. Globalization brought interdependence, competitiveness and transparency. All these made it more difficult for Iran to continue with its isolation from the world.<sup>17</sup> Internally, the aspirations of Iranian people, especially the youth, for a better life in terms of economic development and a freer social and political life became apparent in the 1990s<sup>18</sup>. Of course, the decision makers had to respond to these.

Among the candidates of the 1997 elections in Iran, Mohammed Khatemi, who represented these requests of the Iranian people, was elected as the president of Iran. Khatemi began to spell the concept of ‘democracy at home and peace abroad’. He advocated a proactive and firm foreign policy, which was based on non- violence and friendly relations with all countries as long as they reciprocated.<sup>19</sup>

The starting point of Khatemi’s new policy was the Organization of Islamic Conference meeting in Tehran in December 1997. At that meeting, he tried to erase Iran’s image of exporting the revolution and interfering in other Muslim countries’ internal affairs. In that regard, he said in his speech: “our

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<sup>17</sup> Shahram Chubin, “ Iran’s Strategic Predicament” *The Middle East Journal* 54, no.1. (2000) : p.3.

<sup>18</sup> R.K.Ramazani, “ The Shifting Premise of Iran’s Foreign Policy: Towards a Democratic Peace” *Middle East Journal* 52, no.2. (1998) :p.178.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. P.181.

civil society neither seeks to dominate others nor to submit to domination.”<sup>20</sup> In order to respond to the requests of the Iranian people for better life standards, he had to deal with economic development. Opening to the world market was the key point for Iran whose economy is highly dependent on the oil and gas sectors. He focused on economic cooperation with the European countries. This was tightened with the partial lifting of the embargo by the US for European firms to invest in Iran.<sup>21</sup> In the end of the 1990s, Iran became enthusiastic about participating more in world markets in exportation and transportation of oil and natural gas.<sup>22</sup> While there were all these efforts to integrate with the world and Khatami’s words to the effect of a will to start a dialogue between the peoples of Iran and the US, there is still hostility in Iran at the state level towards the US and Israel.<sup>23</sup> Anti-Americanism and anti-Zionism are usually used in Iran as an ideological support for the continuation and legitimacy of the regime.<sup>24</sup> In his interview on Cable News Network (CNN) on January 1998, Khatami said: ‘When I speak of dialogue, I intend dialogue between civilizations and cultures, but the dialogue between civilizations and nations is different from political relations.’<sup>25</sup> The conservative wing is much harder against the US. The supreme leader, Ali Khamanei said: ‘The correct way of avoiding the domination on Iran of a power like America... was to raise a solid and high wall in America’s way... Negotiating with a domineering

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<sup>20</sup> Ramazani, p.183.

<sup>21</sup> Mahmood Monshipouri, “Iran’s Search for the New Pragmatism” *Middle East Policy* 6, no.2. (1998) : p.195.

<sup>22</sup> Bijan Khajepour and Siamak Namazi, “Pres Reflects Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” *Middle East Insight* (1999) :p.52-53.

<sup>23</sup> Ramazani, p.183.

<sup>24</sup> Turan Morali, “Turkey and Iran” Conference in the Foreign Policy Institute, Ankara, March 2002.

<sup>25</sup> CNN, 7 January 1998 in Charles Kurzman, “Soft on Satan: Challenges for Iranian –US Relations” *Middle East Policy* 6, no.1. (1998) : p.71.

power like America is worse than having ties.’<sup>26</sup> Because the strong opposition of the conservatives, and the institutional and constitutional constraints, Khatemi had to admit the difficulties to make reforms in Iran: ‘I must admit that after three and a half years in the presidency, I am aware that the head of state does not have the adequate prerogatives to do this job.’<sup>27</sup>

## **1.2. Understanding Turkish Foreign Policy**

### **1.2.1. Institutions which shape Turkish Foreign Policy**

a) The Foreign Ministry: It has an influential role in the decision making process of Turkish foreign policy. There is a historically rooted foreign policy culture among the officials of the foreign ministry. Turkish governments usually carefully take their ideas into consideration.

b) The Military: Turkish military is highly sensitive about the preservation of the secular Atatürkist state. Therefore, any foreign policy, which is perceived as a threat to the Turkish regime, is objected by the military. The military joins foreign policy making through the National Security Council (NSC), which is composed of the president, the prime minister and some leading ministers on the civilian side, and the Chief of General Staff and some leading commanders on the military side. NSC has a ‘prior advisory’ role in foreign policy making

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<sup>26</sup> Reuters, 4 February 1998 in Kurzman, p.71.

<sup>27</sup> Suzanne Maloney in “Symposium: US Policy Towards Iran, Time for a Change?” *Middle East Policy* 8, no.1. (2001) : p.5.



according to the constitution.<sup>28</sup> Because of the special influence of the military over the government in Turkey, such advice is carefully implemented.

c) The Parliament: The constitution gives the right to the members of the parliament to participate in foreign policy making.<sup>29</sup> The Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, which is composed of parliaments from the parties represented in the parliament, studies and prepares reports on foreign policy issues of Turkey.

d) The Council of Ministers: It is responsible towards the parliament for the maintenance of national security and the preparation of the armed forces for the defense of the country.<sup>30</sup>

#### 1.2.2. Foreign Policy of the Turkish Republic

After the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, Turkey focused its energy on internal development and sought to avoid foreign tensions that could divert it from that goal.<sup>31</sup> Turkish foreign policy makers attributed their foreign policy to Atatürk's saying 'peace at home, peace abroad'. Turkey participated in the Balkan Pact in 1934 and the Sadabad Pact in 1937 in order to secure itself from the growing threats of Italy and Germany.

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<sup>28</sup> See Article 118 of the Turkish Constitution in Seref Gözübüyük, *Son Değişikliklerle TC 1982 Anayasası* (Ankara : Turhan Kitabevi, 1999), p.112.

<sup>29</sup> See Articles 87, 90 and 92 of the Turkish Constitution in Ibid., p.86-91.

<sup>30</sup> See Article 117 of the Turkish Constitution in Ibid., p.111.

<sup>31</sup> Alan Makovsky, " The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy," *SAIS Review* 19, no.1 (1999): p.93.

It succeeded to remain neutral during the Second World War with President İsmet İnönü's balanced policies.

Turkey felt insecure after the war with the emergence of a stronger Soviet Republic. Soviets' aim of exporting the communist regime and Stalin's claims on Turkish territory concerned the politicians in Turkey. Therefore, Turkey participated in the Western alliance with its membership to NATO in 1952. In addition to this, contemporary civilization was in the West at that time, while its eastern neighbors were not completely sovereign states yet. Therefore, Turkey invested its future in the West. Its strategic alliance with the West was the main determinant of Turkish foreign policy. Turkey took financial and military aid from the US throughout the Cold War.

The main principle of Turkey's Middle East policy was to avoid interference with that region's affairs.<sup>32</sup> The Jupiter missile issue of 1962, the Cyprus issue of 1964 and 1974 were the events that led to crises with Turkey's alliance with the West. As a reaction to these events and Turkey's sensitivity to the Palestinian issue, there was a move towards a rapprochement with the Middle East in Turkish foreign policy during these years.<sup>33</sup>

The early 1990s was dominated by Turgut Özal's (1983-1993) new activism on Turkish foreign policy. However, the military and Foreign Ministry wanted the continuation of traditional cautious policies. The following

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<sup>32</sup> Pinar Bilgin and Bilge Criss, "Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Middle East" *Middle East Review of International Relations* 1, iss.1 (1997), (e-journal)

[http://www.cc.columbia.edu/sec/dlc/ciao/olj/meria/meria97\\_criss.html](http://www.cc.columbia.edu/sec/dlc/ciao/olj/meria/meria97_criss.html)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

years showed that Turkish foreign policy kept on its traditional course. The aim of being a member of the European Union together with continuation of its strategic alliance with the US constituted the main direction of Turkish foreign policy in the late 1990s.

### **1.3. A Brief Historical Background of Turkish-Iranian Relations until the 1990s<sup>34</sup>**

There was a struggle between Safavid Persian Shiism and Ottoman Sünni Islam till the 18<sup>th</sup> century. After wars that lasted for one and a half centuries, they agreed to live as sovereign states in autonomous parts of the Islamic world community.<sup>35</sup> During the First World War, both sides experienced imperial intervention and internal fragmentation. After the war, their main concern was to maintain their territorial integrity, political authority and independent foreign policy. The leaders of both sides, Kemal Atatürk and Reza Shah , followed the way of westernization in order to succeed with development.<sup>36</sup>

After the Second World War, Soviet communism was a common threat for both countries and they chose to cooperate with the Western Alliance. Both of them were important countries for the US policy of containment. As

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<sup>34</sup> For a chronological list of the main events in Turkish-Iranian relations between 1922 and 1994, see Nezih Tavlâş, "Türk-Iran İlişkileri Kronolojisi," *Strateji*1 (1995).

<sup>35</sup> Graham Fuller, "Orta Asya'da İki Rakip: İran ve Türkiye," *Strateji* 1 (1995): p.174, and John Calabrese, "Turkey and Iran: Limits of a Stable Relationship," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no.1 (1998):p.2.

founding members the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), they became regional allies. During the 1950s, Turkey occupied a special position in the eyes of the West and its military capability surpassed that of Iran. However, this was not a significant concern in Iran, because none of the sides regarded the other as its primary regional adversary. Their security concerns were focused on Greece for Turkey and on radical Arabs for Iran.<sup>37</sup> Then in 1964, they established the Regional Cooperation and Development grouping (RCD), which became Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in 1985. By the mid 1970s, Iran became a regional power with its increasing oil profits and massive arms acquisitions. Since Iran's military and economic interests were projected mainly towards the Persian Gulf, Turkish concerns disappeared.<sup>38</sup>

However, the revolution of 1979 changed Turkey's perception of Iran. Iran did not only reject the Western Alliance, but it also followed hostile policies towards the US. Additionally, the Islamic nature of the regime and its policy of exporting the revolution to the other Muslim countries concerned Turkey. The positive contribution of the Iranian revolution for Turkey was to increase its declining importance in the eyes of the US as a strategic partner in the region against the Iranian regime.<sup>39</sup> However, Turkey's new perception of Iran did not effect the bilateral relations in the 1980s. Turkey did not participate in the US embargo of 1980 to Iran, referring to the special nature of Turkish-Iranian relations and its national economic interests.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, Iran

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<sup>36</sup> Atilla Eralp and Özlem Tür, "Iran'la Devrim Sonrası İlişkiler" in *Türkiye ve Ortadoğu Tarih Kimlik Güvenlik*, ed.Meliha B. Altunışık (İstanbul: Boyut Kitapları, 1999): p.70.

<sup>37</sup> Calabrese, p.2.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>39</sup> Eralp and Tur, p.72.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.76.

was seriously busy with the Iran-Iraq War of 1981-1988. With its policies of active neutrality and pragmatic activism, Turkey managed to increase its exports to Iran to an unprecedented amount.<sup>41</sup> In 1984, the two countries signed a security agreement, according to which none of the sides would allow activities on its territory against the security of the other. Accordingly, PKK activities on Iranian territory were limited in the 1980s.<sup>42</sup>

#### **1.4. What Changed in the 1990s Effecting the Turkish-Iranian Relations?**

There were a number of changes in international relations in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. These changes compel one to analyze Turkish-Iranian relations separately after 1990. In this part, these changes effecting the relations of the two countries will be explained by categorizing them into global, regional and domestic levels.

##### **1.4.1. Global Changes**

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the bi-polar structure was the main change in the early 1990s in international relations. This led Turkish policy makers to an anxiety that the end of the bi-polar structure would reduce Turkey's strategic importance to its Western allies. The Gulf War of 1991 ended the concerns of Turkish foreign policy elite. There were now smaller 'rogue states' in the Middle East, whose policies clashed with US interests, and the US needed Turkey's strategic partnership against these states.

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<sup>41</sup> Turkey's exports to Iran was 11.8 million dollars in 1979, increased to 790 million dollars in 1982 and 1.1 billion dollars in 1985. Source: Undersecretaries of Turkish Foreign Trade.

The US now became the sole superpower over the world, and without the Soviet counter balance it asserted its military supremacy in the Gulf. It began to pressure the 'rogue states'. The US pressed its allies to isolate Iran and therefore the US pressure constrained potential Turkish-Iranian cooperation.

#### 1.4.2. Regional Changes

The end of the Iran-Iraq War led the volume of trade between Turkey and Iran to decrease. Iran's imports from Turkey were mainly because of the necessities of war. Iran wanted to decrease its dependency on Turkey and directed its commercial priorities at Western Europe. Turkish construction firms were expected to have an important share in the construction of Iran after the war, but Turkish firms distrusted the Middle Eastern market because of the experiences of the past, when they were not paid for the job done on time, let alone long afterwards.<sup>43</sup>

The lack of authority in northern Iraq and the Kurdish population in these areas constituted a potential threat for both Iran and Turkey in terms of their territorial integrity and border security. Although they have common objectives on the problem, they mostly chose to use the Kurdish card one against the other, rivalry on other issues having had overtaken immediate concerns.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Eralp and Tür, p.77.

<sup>43</sup> Eralp and Tür, p.78.

<sup>44</sup> Calabrese, p.5.

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to the formation of newly independent Turkic and Muslim Republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia. These states were both an area of cooperation and rivalry for Turkey and Iran. The new situation looked bright for Turkey to establish economic, cultural and political ties with its kin, while it was an opportunity for Iran to come out of its isolation from the world with this new door, opened.<sup>45</sup>

#### 1.4.3. Domestic Changes

In June 1989, Iran's supreme leader, Ayetollah Khomeini, died. Then, Ali Khamanei became the supreme leader and Hashemi Rafsanjani became the president. From then on, there was an internal debate between the radicals and the moderates. With Rafsanjani's moderate and pragmatist policies, Iran wanted to take a more effective role in regional relations, establishing better ties with its neighbors. These changes improved with Mohammed Khatemi's coming to power in 1997. This led to a debate on the US policy of isolating Iran on the one hand, and with a new regional active role of Iran, led to the regional rivalry between Turkey and Iran on the other.<sup>46</sup>

Simultaneously, tension between Kemalists and Islamists sharpened in Turkey. The rise of Islamists concerned the secularists, and the secularists became more sensitive towards the preservation of the secular regime. This led the secularists to be concerned about Turkey's relations with Iran, which is

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<sup>45</sup> İhsan Çolak, "Değişen Stratejiler Işığında İran-Türk Cumhuriyetleri İlişkilerinde Yeni Gelişmeler," *Avrasya Dosyası* 5, no.3. (1999): p.210.

<sup>46</sup> Eralp and Tür, p.78.

perceived as a potential threat to the Turkish secular regime by the secular Ataturkist elite of Turkey.<sup>47</sup>

Such changes in international, regional and domestic politics led to dynamism in Turkish-Iranian relations in the 1990s. Accordingly, there were a number of bilateral issues increasing the tension between the two countries.

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<sup>47</sup> Calabrese, p.5.



## CHAPTER 2

### BILATERAL ISSUES

#### 2.1. Iran's Aim of Exporting the Islamic Regime and the Assassination Crises in Turkey

As previously mentioned, one of the basic principles of the Iranian foreign policy was exporting the Islamic revolution to the other Muslim countries. This was precisely embodied in the constitution:

The Constitution, having regard to the Islamic contents of the Iranian Revolution, which was a movement for the victory of all the oppressed over the arrogant, provides a basis for the continuation of that revolution both inside and outside the country. It particularly tries to do this in developing international relations with other Islamic movements and peoples, so as to prepare the way towards a united single world community.<sup>1</sup>

Ayetollah Khomeini, the leader of the Iranian revolution, described the revolution as a starting point, which would spread to other Muslim countries.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Ayetollah Huseyin Ali Montazeri, one of the leading men of the revolution, gave a speech in the radio in September 1979:

There is the fact that Iranian revolution can not be bounded only with the borders of Iran. In fact, our revolution is not an Iranian revolution, but it is an Islamic revolution... There are some expectations of the oppressed Muslim people over the world from the Iranian people. Therefore, our revolution will reach these people. Iranian government and people must provide all the necessary means for all these freedom wars and Palestinian revolution.<sup>3</sup>

Revolutionaries thought that Iran was the only true Islamic government and their aim was to create Islamic governments based on the Iranian model on other

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<sup>1</sup> Iran Constitution, p.5 ; available from <http://www.aghayan.com.html>; Internet; accessed 23 April 2002.

<sup>2</sup> İhsan D. Dağı, *Ortadoğu'da İslam ve Siyaset*. (İstanbul: Boyut Kitapları,1998), p.74.

Muslim territories. Khomeini argued that this would be in peaceful ways. However, Iranians did not only make the propaganda of the revolution, but also trained Islamic revolutionaries from other countries in Iran and financially supported them. These acts are not regarded as peaceful ways by the other Muslim countries and are perceived as a threat to their security.

In the late 1980s and during the 1990s, all these Iranian activities coincided with the sensitivity of Turkish secularist elite over the increasing role of religion on public life. In 1989, Turkish authorities found out that Iranian diplomats were bringing literally tons of religious propaganda material in diplomatic pouches. The Turkish Foreign Ministry put a limit of 50 kg. for all diplomatic pouches.<sup>4</sup> Iran opened cultural centers in Turkey, through which it made its propaganda and indoctrination.<sup>5</sup> Also, there were radical Islamic periodicals supporting an Iranian kind of a state system in Turkey: *Tevhid*(Unity), *İstiklal-Şehadet* (Independence-Martyrdom), *Söz* (The Word), *Dünya ve İslam* (The World and Islam), *Yeryüzü*(The Earth) and *Davet*(The Call).<sup>6</sup> In the spring of 1992, a group of youth called 'Revolutionary Muslim Youth', who identified themselves with one of these journals, *Tevhid*, put a banner on Istanbul University's School of Law building to commemorate the third anniversary of Khomeini's death.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Nur B. Criss, "Arduous Diplomacy: Turkish- Iranian Relations (1979-1996)" (Unpublished Article, Bilkent University, 1996): p.19.

<sup>5</sup> Ely Karmon, "Radical Islamic Groups in Turkey" *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 4 (1998), [e-journal] [http://www.ciaonet.org.olj/meria/meria198\\_karmon.html](http://www.ciaonet.org.olj/meria/meria198_karmon.html) (accessed 3 November 2001)

<sup>6</sup> John Calabrese, "Turkey and Iran: Limits of a Stable Relationship," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no.1 (1998): p.7.

<sup>7</sup> Criss, p.11.

What caused great reaction in Turkey against Iran were not these propagandistic activities, but the claims about the Iranian support of terrorist activities in Turkey to establish a base for an Islamic government in Turkey. These claims became concrete with assassinations of Turkish journalists, academicians and a businessman in Turkey who were in favor of Turkey's secular structure and against Iranian kind of a system. Two prominent Turkish academicians, Bahriye Üçok and Muammer Aksoy, and two Turkish journalists, Çetin Emeç and Uğur Mumcu, were assassinated in the early 1990s. Four days after Mumcu's assassination, there was an unsuccessful assassination attempt on Jak Kamhi, a prominent Jewish businessman in Turkey. Especially the funeral of Uğur Mumcu, to which approximately 100 000 Turkish citizens attended, was a show of growing reaction among Turkish secularists against Iran. The assassins to be and 19 others were arrested and they were claimed to be the members of the radical *Hezbollah* organization, an Iran-related movement.<sup>8</sup> Although the Iranian President, Hashemi Rafsanjani, denied having any relations with the acts, firstly Turkish police reports and then Turkish Minister of Interior, Ismet Sezgin, revealed the existence of another Islamic organization, the *Islamic Action*. According to police reports, the members of the organization confessed to be the actors of the Jak Kamhi assassination attempt and to have been trained in Iran with the aim of creating an Islamic state in Turkey.<sup>9</sup> On February 6, 1993, Turkish Foreign Minister, Hikmet Cetin, met his counterpart Ali Akbar Velayeti, in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) summit in Pakistan and gave him documentary evidence of Iranian connection regarding assassinations in Turkey.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Criss, p.20.

<sup>9</sup> *Turkish Probe*, 9 February 1993 in Ibid., p.21

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.21

An important point needs to be mentioned here that Ankara tried to be careful not to escalate this issue into a conflict. Semih İdiz, in *Turkish Probe* daily, argued that many officials in Turkey thought that Americans could use this crisis in their policies towards Iran, which would put Turkey under a heavy responsibility in the region:

... there is a deliberate effort on the part of the Ankara government not to escalate this bottleneck into crisis. According to one senior state official here, the Turks are also wary that boosting tension could make this country instrumental in future American plan for Iran. 'If we go too far,' he says, 'the Americans could use us as a front in their own dispute and avoid responsibility which will end up being borne by Turkey.' ... suspicion has started to grow against allies as much as researchers focusing on Iranian activities. 'Is Turkey being used for a future conflict?' is a key question in the minds of many officials.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to this, Turkey wanted to establish better relations with the new president of the Islamic Republic, who was giving signals for change in Iran. At that time, there was an internal struggle in Iran between the new president Hashemi Rafsanjani, who was in favor of the principle of consolidating Islam in one country instead of instigating simultaneous revolutions in neighboring Muslim countries, and the radicals who were insisting on supporting Islamic revolutionaries in other countries. In such circumstances, Turkey followed a path by not increasing the tension further, which would otherwise feed into what the radicals desired. At that time, Turkish president, Turgut Özal, pointed the provocative incidents.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, Turkish Prime Minister, Süleyman Demirel, called for a coolheaded approach to the Iranian link in the assassinations in order not to disrupt bilateral relations unnecessarily and expressed that they did not believe that the Iranian state was involved in the murders.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Semih D. İdiz, "An Unholy Alliance" *Turkish Probe*, 16 February 1993 in Ibid., p.22.

<sup>12</sup> *Turkish Daily News* (Ankara), 31 January 1993 in Karmon, p.8.

<sup>13</sup> TRT TV Network (Ankara), 5 February 1993 in Ibid., p.8.

The Turkish security forces waged successful operations against the Islamic terrorist organizations in 1994 and 1995, and consequently, there was a decline in radical Islamic terrorist activities in these years. *Ilim*, one of *Hezbollah*'s two splinter groups (*Ilim* and *Menzil*), stopped most of its armed activities, many cadres of the *Islamic Movement* were arrested and *IBDA-C (The Front of Islamic Great East Warriors)* retained its level of activity mostly by acts of bombing and arson.<sup>14</sup> Then, in March 1996, the leader of the *Islamic Action*, İrfan Çağırıcı, was arrested and he revealed the Iranian connection of the organization. However, the accusations were related mainly to the old known terrorist attacks of the 1990-93 period and did not seriously affect bilateral relations.<sup>15</sup>

However, the relations were seriously strained at the beginning of 1997. The Iranian ambassador in Turkey, Mohammed Bagheri, participated in Jerusalem Night celebrations which was organized by the Sincan mayor of the pro-Islamic Welfare Party on 31 January- 2 February 1997. There he made a speech in which he called for the institution of sharia in Turkey.<sup>16</sup> This coincided with the strong anxiety of the Turkish Armed Forces and secularist elite related to the Welfare Party's pro-Islamic policies and the increasing danger of reactionism in Turkey. In such circumstances, Turkey showed a harsh reaction against this speech. The Turkish Armed Forces paraded a convoy of tanks in Sincan as a show of force to intimidate the reactionaries.<sup>17</sup> This time, there was a crisis in state-to-state relations. Turkey decided to expel ambassador Bagheri. Tehran replied to this by expelling his

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<sup>14</sup> *Turkish Daily News* (Ankara), 8 January 1996 in *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>16</sup> *Turkish Focus*, March 1997, p.12 in Calabrese, p.8.

<sup>17</sup> Eralp and Tür, p.93.

Turkish counterpart. In fact, Turkish secularists used this matter as a tool in their internal struggle with reactionism.<sup>18</sup>

Not much later, Tehran tried to normalize the relations. Iranian foreign minister, Ali Akbar Velayeti, paid a visit to Turkey. In his visit he called for the return of the Turkish expelled ambassador. However, the Turkish president, Süleyman Demirel, told Velayeti that Tehran's request was not justified and challenged the Turkish position. He added that Iranian officials must not interfere in Turkey's domestic affairs. Meanwhile, the Turkish Prime Minister, Necmettin Erbakan tried to cool down the sentiments and reassured Velayeti about the bilateral relations and guaranteed that the natural gas agreement would not be disrupted because of this crisis.<sup>19</sup>

Then there was a period of silence, which erupted with the arrest of 92 members of the *Hezbollah*, a Kurdish led Islamist counter-PKK organization, by the Turkish police on 20 October 1999. In the Turkish press, it was claimed that they were trained in Iran.<sup>20</sup> Only one day after these arrests, a Turkish secular-Kemalist professor and journalist, Ahmet Taner Kışlalı, was assassinated by a car bomb attack. Then just one day after the assassination, three Iranians were detained at the Istanbul airport while trying, it was alleged, to flee the country.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> This crisis was a part of Turkish secularists' campaign arguing that reactionism began to be stronger with the interest of coming to power in Turkey and accordingly they planned the 28 February process which led to a post modern coup d'état. Turkish Armed Forces was concerned about Refah party's Islamist approach and forced Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan to resign.

<sup>19</sup> Huda al-Husayni, "Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Others Should Beware Iran's Expansionist Policy" *London Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 19 March 1997 in FBIS-NES-97-078

<sup>20</sup> *TRKNWS-L*, 20 October 1999 in Olson, p.880.

<sup>21</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 23 October 1999 in FBIS-WEU-1999-1023

The assassination was immediately compared with that of Uğur Mumcu, and the Turkish media and some politicians focused on Islamic organizations and its Iranian connections. However, the Turkish Prime Minister, Bülent Ecevit, was careful not to make any accusations regarding an Iranian connection. İlnur Cevik, the editor of influential *Turkish Daily News*, related this to Turkey's priority on its gas project with Iran.<sup>22</sup>

Iran protested the arrests of Iranians and denied any kind of involvement in Kışlalı's murder. Again, Iran related this with the US and Israel, which wanted to raise the concern of secularists in Turkey and empower the bases of the Turkish-Israeli cooperation.<sup>23</sup> Olson claims that it seems unlikely that Tehran, at least by the autumn of 1999(referring to the pipeline projects), would have much interest in the assassination of Kışlalı.<sup>24</sup> Tschanguiz Pahlavan, representing the Iranian view about the issue, argues in his essay that domestic religious movements are not products of the Iranian revolution and it would be a mistake to consider Iran the sole source of religious movements in the region. He invites the Turkish policy makers to consider the issue within Turkey's socio-economic realities and suggests finding out the causes of these acts within this framework.<sup>25</sup>

The short term relative silence ended with the beginning of 2000 by a series of operations by the Turkish police and security forces against *Hezbollah* hideouts. These operations led to the discovery of many murders by this organization. Gökhan Aydın, the state of emergency regional governor, and Haşim Tunç, the deputy chief

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<sup>22</sup> Olson, p.881.

<sup>23</sup> *Tehran Times* (Tehran), 27 October 1999 in FBIS-NES- 1999-1027

<sup>24</sup> Olson, p.881

of Gaziantep police organization, expressed their views that *Hezbollah* was closely related with Iran and the members of this organization, which aims to establish an Iranian kind of state in Turkey, were trained in Iran.<sup>26</sup> Edip Gümüş, the *Hezbollah* militant in charge of the activities in central Anatolia, revealed that large quantities of arms were transferred from Russia to the organization's camps in Iran and officials of the Iranian secret service helped them to acquire funds, forged passports and identity cards.<sup>27</sup> The Turkish media quickly started a mass campaign against Iran and emphasized the link of the murders of Kışlalı, Mumcu and others with the *Hezbollah* organization, and the link between *Hezbollah* and Iran.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, there were claims in the media that *Hezbollah* worked hand in hand with the Iranian Intelligence Service and with the embassy of Iran in Turkey. The organization was alleged to gather intelligence information for Iran about Turkish military units in eastern and southeastern Turkey.<sup>29</sup>

All these coincided with the visit of Iranian Foreign Minister, Kemal Kharrazi, to Turkey. Kharrazi denied any Iranian support to the organization. He called for cooperation to end these kinds of conflicts, pointing at the natural gas project as a symbol of cooperation.<sup>30</sup> Turkish high level officials were careful that time in their speeches not to hurt bilateral relations, unlike the 1989 and 1997 crises, which led to the expulsion of ambassadors.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Tschanguiz H. Pahlavan, "Turkish- Iranian Relations An Iranian View," in *Reluctant Neighbor*, ed. Henri J. Barkey (Washington, D.C. : United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996):p.73.

<sup>26</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 20 January 2000 in FBIS-WEU-2000-0121 and Anatolia (Ankara), 26 January 2000 in FBIS-WEU-2000-0126

<sup>27</sup> *Milliyet* (Istanbul), 21 January 2000 in FBIS-WEU-2000-0121

<sup>28</sup> For example see *Milliyet* (Istanbul), 29 January 2000 in FBIS-WEU-2000-0205 , *Milliyet*( Istanbul), 16 February 2000 in FBIS-WEU-2000-0217 and *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), 3 March 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0304

<sup>29</sup> *Hürriyet*(Istanbul), 4 March 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0304

<sup>30</sup> *Hürriyet*( Istanbul), 20 January 2000 in Olson, p.883.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 883.



However, the tension increased with the May 2000 operations against *Hezbollah*. Turkish media, referring to sources from the Interior Ministry, claimed that arrested militants of the organization were the murderers of 17 Turkish journalists, professors and other well known figures. In light of the information gathered from the *Hezbollah*'s study group, the *Tevhid-Selam* organization was behind the assassinations. It was alleged to work hand in hand with Iran's *Pasdaran*.<sup>32</sup> The arrested men, who defined themselves as *Jerusalem Commandos*, confessed having committed the murders and revealed the connection of the organization with the Iranian intelligence.<sup>33</sup>

The Turkish Foreign Ministry expressed its view so as not to rest the relations unless they received adequate information proving the role of Iran in the assassinations.<sup>34</sup> However, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, in disagreement with the Foreign Ministry, expressed on 17 May that Iran for years had provided shelter to separatist terrorists and was still trying to export its revolution.<sup>35</sup> But Ecevit tried to adopt a conciliatory approach by drawing a distinction between the Iranian supporters of the murderers and the Khatemi government. İlnur Çevik, editor of *Turkish Daily News*, interpreted this approach to stem from Turkey's sensitivity about not disturbing its regional interests, especially the energy supply route issue.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> For these claims see *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), 11 May 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0511, Anatolia(Ankara), 16 May 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0516, *Milliyet* (Istanbul), 16 May 2000 in FBIS-WEU-2000-0522 and Anatolia(Ankara), 16 May 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0516

<sup>33</sup> *Hürriyet*(Istanbul), 11 May 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0522, Anatolia (Ankara), 15 May 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0515 and Anatolia (Ankara), 20 May 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0520

<sup>34</sup> *Milliyet* (Istanbul), 9 May 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0511

<sup>35</sup> *Hürriyet*(Istanbul), 17 May 2000 in Olson, p.885.

<sup>36</sup> *Turkish Daily News* (Ankara), 18 May 2000 in Ibid., p.885.

Iranian Foreign Ministry summoned the Turkish ambassador on 21 May and expressed dissatisfaction about the claims of Turkish media and politicians.<sup>37</sup> Kemal Kharrazi announced that Iran had no connection with the *Hezbollah*; in fact it was the fabrication of the Turkish intelligence, and the claims about Iranian involvement in the murders were as a part of the Zionist propaganda against Iran.<sup>38</sup>

At that time, Ahmad Behbahani, who identified himself as the head of the security of the former Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani, and the coordinator of the terrorists activities of Iran carried on inside and outside the country, turned himself over to the Turkish intelligence, MIT. It was claimed in the media that he had helped Turkish security forces to arrest the murderers and would reveal to Turkish authorities about Iranian support of terrorism. Turkish authorities were cautious about his explanations.<sup>39</sup> Iran denied the allegations and claimed Behbahani to be a member of *Mujahedin- i Khalq*, which is an armed opposition organization against Iran.<sup>40</sup> After a period of investigation about him, both the Turkish intelligence and the American intelligence (CIA) announced that he was an imposter.<sup>41</sup>

These circumstances led the new Turkish President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, to fall into a dilemma about attending the ECO summit in Tehran. After a series of public discussions, Sezer decided not to attend. However, it was mostly a symbolic absence. On May 2000, while the hot discussions about the assassinations continued, Turkey signed trade agreements with Iran as a result of the visit of the Turkish

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<sup>37</sup> IRNA (Tehran), 21 May 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0521

<sup>38</sup> *Tehran Times* (Tehran), 21 May 2000 in Olson, p.886.

<sup>39</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 5 June 2000

<sup>40</sup> IRNA( Tehran), 11 June 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0611

delegation including 120 prominent Turkish businessmen. After the agreement, Iranian Foreign Trade Minister, Raze Shafei, stated that Khatemi was not responsible for the legacy of the past governments and called for opening a new page with Turkey.<sup>42</sup> Turkey attended the meeting with a group of high-ranking officials.

Interestingly and unlike the previous statements of the police, Turkish Police Chief, Turan Genc, told on 23 May 2000 that there was yet no evidence that might incriminate the Islamic Republic in the recent assassinations in Turkey.<sup>43</sup> Then on 24 May 2000, captured members of the *Jerusalem Warriors Organization* told that people in Iran who helped them became inactive after reformists came to power. They added that they could not then get the financial aid, which they received previously.<sup>44</sup> Accordingly, the leader and bomber of the *Jerusalem Warriors* informed the State Security Court in Ankara:

Our contracts were a group of revolutionary guards who were instructed by the Iranian mullahs to cooperate with us. They were not intelligence agents. We regularly received funds every month. However, the amount we received was reduced and then completely cut after Mohammed Khatemi was elected president in 1999.<sup>45</sup>

Then, on 12 February 2001, Turkish Foreign Minister, İsmail Cem, said prior to his visit to Iran that they planned to start a new dialogue process with Iran. He added that his visit to Iran would be a beginning to improve economic relations.<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, the steps of cooperation with Iran intensified combined with the effect of the improvements in the gas purchase.

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<sup>41</sup> Olson, p.887.

<sup>42</sup> *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), 30 May 2000 in Olson, p.887

<sup>43</sup> IRNA (Tehran), 23 May 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0523

<sup>44</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 24 May 2000 in FBIS-WEU-2000-0525

<sup>45</sup> *Sabah* (Istanbul), 27 May 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0528

<sup>46</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 12 February 2001 in FBIS-SOV-2001-0212

One year later, Ankara State Security Court No.2 sentenced three of the captured terrorists to death and 15 suspects to heavy imprisonment ranging from three to 18 years.<sup>47</sup> But there was not any reference to the Iranian connection either in the announcement of the court or in the media.

The question naturally comes to minds why all these disputes and high tensions took place during the 1990s, and then the tension decreased and the relations became positive. We can determine the following points, while examining all this process:

1. There was a policy of change in Iranian foreign policy regarding the policy of exporting the revolution. Radical policies of Khomeini softened with that of Rafsanjani, and came to the stage of aiming at good neighborly relations with Khatemi. The statements of the captured terrorists that help from Iran ended with Khatemi's government support this idea.
2. Iran misperceived the political Islam as a potential to establish an Iranian kind of Islamic regime in Turkey.<sup>48</sup>
3. Through his tenure in 1997, Khatemi was unable to control all the military, intelligence and judicial systems. These three institutions were largely responsible for the acts of exporting the revolution, not the Iranian government.<sup>49</sup>
4. Turkish secularist elite used 'the danger of sharia coming from Iran' rhetoric in their fight against reactionism in Turkey. This was associated with the 28 February agenda of Turkey.

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<sup>47</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 7 January 2002 in FBIS-WEU-2002-0107

<sup>48</sup> Turan Morali, "Turkey and Iran" Conference in The Institute of Foreign Policy, Ankara, March 2002.

<sup>49</sup> Olson, p.888.

5. With the capture of the leader of PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, and successful operations against PKK militants, Turkey decided to finish off this PKK problem. Accordingly, Turkey planned to cut all the aid, either logistic or financial, or whatever else, from Iran to the PKK, by putting pressure on the Iranian government using the assassination issues.<sup>50</sup>
6. Secular Turkey wanted to give the message to the West that Turkey played an active role in blocking Iranian influence, through which it wanted to empower its strategic importance for the West in the region.<sup>51</sup>
7. Turkey began to understand that there are multiple sectors of power in Iran. The government could not control the Revolutionary Guard Army, the intelligence and the judiciary. Given the complex structure of the Iranian state, Turkey began to see that any Iranian connection did not necessarily mean connection with the Iranian government. Moreover, in the struggle between reformists and radicals in Iran, Turkey wanted to support policies of the reformist Khatemi government by establishing good neighborly relations with Iran.
8. The end of the days of living with the fear of reactionism in Turkey and the new policies of Iran's reformist government led the two states to give priority to economic cooperation such as energy purchase, energy transportation and border trade. Better economic relations needed better political relations, and the two states chose to put back the past conflictual relations. They became sensitive in the late 1990s and in the beginning of the new century, to their economic interests that should not be violated by these kinds of conflicts.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p.886

## **2.2. The Kurdish Issue, Border Problems and the PKK**

Kurds living on a very important geostrategic area between Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran without a political unification created problems in the region for years. The existence of a Kurdish minority meant potential threat for the territorial integrity of these states. Instead of cooperating against this threat, they mostly chose to use the Kurdish card against each other.

Related with the Turkish-Iranian relations, the Kurdish issue has been a matter of conflict between the two states. Turkey has been seriously concerned about its territorial integrity in the east and southeast regions of the country as a consequence of the acts of the Kurdish rebels beginning from the establishment of the Republic.

When PKK(Kurdish Workers Party) began its terrorist attacks in 1984 in eastern Turkey, Turkish officials were anxious about a possible support from Iran to Kurdish guerrillas, or at least allowing Iranian territory to be used as a staging area for cross border attacks.<sup>52</sup> Accordingly, Turkey signed a security agreement with Iran on 28 October 1984. Both sides promised to prohibit any kind of action on its

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<sup>51</sup> Pahlavan, p.75 and A.Saleh, "What is Turkey's secular regime seeking" *Jomhuri-ye Eslami*, 29 May 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0715

<sup>52</sup> Calabrese, p.3.

territory against the security of the other.<sup>53</sup> Iran was mostly loyal to the agreement and there were no PKK attacks to Turkey from the Iranian border except a few.<sup>54</sup> During the Iran-Iraqi War of 1981-1988, Iran collaborated with and equipped the Iraqi Kurds against the Iraqi army.<sup>55</sup> Iran was trying to promote the Islamic movement among all Kurds. But it was unlikely to be well accepted in Marxist-Leninist PKK.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry announced in July 1992 that they agreed with Iran to cooperate against PKK. The Border Security Committee was reactivated at that time. In October 1993, they signed a joint security protocol, according to which none of the states would allow a terrorist organization to exist on its soil.<sup>56</sup> However, these efforts remained a symbol of goodwill between the two states.<sup>57</sup>

PKK intensified its terrorist activities against Turkey in 1994 and the mountainous Iranian border offered a safe haven to PKK terrorists.<sup>58</sup> Turkey called on Iran not to allow PKK members to locate in Iranian territory. Iran rejected the claims for its support to PKK. Iran invited Turkey to control the Iranian side of the border and called Turkey to protect its own borders, since they were suitable enough for PKK terrorists to stay and hide.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Atilla Eralp and Özlem Tür, "Iran'la Devrim Sonrası İlişkiler" in *Türkiye ve Ortadoğu Tarih Kimlik Güvenlik*, ed.Meliha B. Altunışık (İstanbul: Boyut Kitapları, 1999), p.77.

<sup>54</sup> Süha Bölükbaşı, "Turkey Copes With Revolutionary Iran," in *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 13, no.1-2, p.104 in Eralp ve Tür, p.77.

<sup>55</sup> Criss,p.13.

<sup>56</sup> Calabrese, p.11

<sup>57</sup> Criss, p.13.

<sup>58</sup> Karmon, p.9.

<sup>59</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 20 September 1996 in FBIS-WEU-96-185

Tension increased with the statements of the officers of the Turkish army. On November 1996, Turkey's 5<sup>th</sup> Border Region's Regiment Commander, Colonel Ismail Pekin, announced that there were large number of PKK training camps both in Armenia and Iran.<sup>60</sup> In the beginning of July 1996, five Turkish soldiers were killed in a PKK attack coming from the Iranian side of the border. Turkey warned the Iranian deputy foreign minister, who was visiting Turkey at that time, about the border security and PKK.<sup>61</sup>

On 17 September 1996, a Common Security Committee met in Ankara and the Turkish delegation submitted a report including detailed information about PKK camps in Iran.<sup>62</sup> There were also hot discussions within Turkey, since the pro-Islamic Prime Minister, Necmettin Erbakan, did not present a clear attitude towards Iran. This angered not only secularists but also most of the public opinion, which was extremely sensitive on the PKK issue.

The Chief of General Staff transmitted their anxiety about the PKK threat from Iran directly to the Presidency. In a report given to the Parliament's Border Security Investigation Committee, it was proved with documentary evidence that Iran gave access to the PKK and the PKK members traveled freely bearing weapons in Iran.<sup>63</sup> In his visit to Tehran in March 1997, Iran's Foreign Minister, Ali Akbar Velayeti, called Turkey to end this crisis, however President Demirel and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Tansu Çiller, did not welcome his request.

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<sup>60</sup> Turkish Daily News (Ankara), 4 November 1996 in FBIS-WEU-96-216

<sup>61</sup> Eralp and Tür, p.90.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p.91.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.92.



They warned Iran not interfere in Turkish internal affairs.<sup>64</sup> Prime Minister Erbakan apologized to Velayeti, but this was not enough to decrease the tension.

On 29 February 1997, a Turkish general, Kenan Deniz, claimed that Iran was giving logistical support to the PKK and there were currently 500 to 600 PKK members on Iranian territory.<sup>65</sup> On May 1997, Turkey launched a cross border operation in northern Iraq against the PKK. Before starting the operation, Turkey informed Iran and wanted Iran to control its borders not to allow PKK terrorists to escape there. However, Iranian authorities did not take this request into consideration and 700 militants escaped to Iran from Turkish forces. Moreover, there were Iranian made weapons captured in PKK camps during the operation.<sup>66</sup>

At that time, Iran sent its Deputy Foreign Minister, Brucerdi, to Turkey. Brucerdi faced strong reaction from Turkish authorities and he was given many documents proving Iran-PKK relations. Brucerdi's statements that Iran was not helping PKK and that Iran ordered its soldiers to kill PKK terrorists did not decrease the tension. Then, on 18 June 1997, Iranian President, Rafsanjani, came to Turkey and assured Turkey that Iran would not give any kind of support to PKK. Meanwhile, the leader of PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, said in a speech to BBC that Iran took an adverse attitude towards PKK and would hand over some PKK militants to Turkey.<sup>67</sup> These two events decreased the tension to a certain extent.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p.94.

<sup>65</sup> AFP (Paris), 29 April 1997 in FBIS-WEU-97-119

<sup>66</sup> AFP (Paris), 6 June 1997 in FBIS-WEU-97-157 and Anatolia (Ankara), 9 June 1997 in FBIS-TOT-97-160

<sup>67</sup> Eralp and Tür, p.96.

During 1998, Turkey continued to put pressure on Iran to cut off any kind of support to the PKK. Turkish authorities decided to terminate PKK by using all diplomatic and military means. The deputy Prime Minister, Bülent Ecevit, claimed on 29 September 1998 that Iran provoked the separatist PKK organization against Turkey and he gave the list of 16 PKK camps on the Iranian side of the border.<sup>68</sup> However, he was cautious not to directly target the government of Iran and said that there were forces in Iran which President Mohammed Khatemi could not control.<sup>69</sup> It is important for Turkey to realize the plurality of power in the Islamic Republic of Iran and to be sensitive not to hurt state to state relations. Meanwhile, Turkey focused on Öcalan's capture and put a heavy pressure on Syria to extradite him to Turkey. Meanwhile, Turkey wanted to take Iran on its side, by explaining its sensitivity on the PKK issue and by giving evidence of Syria-PKK link to Iranian Foreign Minister, Kemal Kharrazi.<sup>70</sup>

However, after Turkey's success with its pressure on Syria, there were allegations that the PKK infiltrated to Iran after being expelled from Syria.<sup>71</sup> Meanwhile, Şemdin Sakık, one of the leaders of the PKK captured by Turkish forces, stated that Iran permitted armed militants of the PKK to establish camps on the border of Iran with Turkey in order to have its own borders protected. He added that the most important aim of Iran by giving support to the PKK was to weaken the Turkish state and establish an Islamic order in Turkey.<sup>72</sup> Then on November 1998, there were reports claiming that Osman Öcalan, the brother of Abdullah Öcalan, and the second man in the organization, escaped to Iran together with many terrorists

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<sup>68</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 29 September 1998 in FBIS-TOT-98-272

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 9 October 1998 in FBIS-WEU-98-282

<sup>71</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 10 November 1998 in FBIS-WEU-98-314

who also managed to escape from Turkey's operation launched in northern Iraq against the PKK.<sup>73</sup>

With the capture of the leader of PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, Turkey wanted to fully destroy the organization. Accordingly, Turkish politicians increased their pressure on Iran. The new Turkish Prime Minister, Bülent Ecevit, accused Iran of continuing its efforts to export its revolution and of supporting the PKK, in spite of the border agreements signed. He charged Iran of taking over Syria's role as the main supporter of the PKK. He noted that Iran hosted the 6<sup>th</sup> annual congress of the PKK.<sup>74</sup> The two countries' TV and radio media engaged in a war of bombast for the next two weeks. The Turkish media showed PKK terrorists confessing to have been trained in Iran.<sup>75</sup>

Meanwhile, Iran intensified its claims that the Turkish armed forces violated the borders. This was not a new claim. After Saddam Hüseyin's loss of control in northern Iraq, there was lack of authority and this created an opportunity to use the region as a safe haven. Therefore, Turkey launched cross-border operations which disturbed Iran who alleged that Turkey violated the Iranian border. For example, Iran claimed on September 1996 that two Turkish helicopters crossed the Iranian border and launched a rocket attack, which resulted in the death of six Iranian citizens.<sup>76</sup> This time, Iran's pressure was heavier than before. Iran alleged that Turkish aircraft bombed sites on Iranian territory and killed five Iranian people. The bombing raid was alleged to have taken place near Piranshahr, a city about 40 miles south of the

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<sup>72</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 15 October 1998 in FBIS-WEU-98-288

<sup>73</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 15 November 1998 in FBIS-WEU-98-319

<sup>74</sup> TRKNWS-L, 9 May 1999 in Olson, p.876.

<sup>75</sup> Olson, p.877.

triangle where the borders of Iran, Turkey and Iraq meet.<sup>77</sup> Iranian Foreign Ministry officials stated that they reserved the right to retaliate and added that they would not return two captured Turkish soldiers until Turkey paid compensation. Denying the Iranian claims, Turkish National Defense Minister, Sebahattin Çakmakoglu, said that it was out of the question for Turkish aircraft to cross the Iranian border and hit certain targets.<sup>78</sup> This heavy pressure of Iran coincided with the July 1999 demonstrations in Iran. It is not surprising that Tehran wanted to use this issue for its domestic political legitimacy.<sup>79</sup>

The Foreign Ministry officials of the two countries started a dialogue to solve the problem. As a result of the discussions, Iran returned the two Turkish soldiers it was holding since 22 July to the Turkish authorities.<sup>80</sup> Turkish Foreign Ministry announced on 6 October 1999 that the investigation delegation reported that Turkish aircraft did not bomb Iranian territory; instead the bombed area was in northern Iraq. The report argued that certain persons living in this area who have Iranian citizenship might have incurred damages. Additionally, Turkey decided to contribute to the compensation of the damage caused.<sup>81</sup> Then Foreign Ministry officials of the two countries focused on setting up security committees. The meetings of high and sub security committees were regulated and they began to meet periodically to solve the disputes on the basis of direct dialogue and cooperation.<sup>82</sup> A memorandum of

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<sup>76</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 20 September 1996 in FBIS-WEU-96-185

<sup>77</sup> Olson, p.878.

<sup>78</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 19 July 1999 in FBIS-WEU-1999-0719

<sup>79</sup> Olson, p.877.

<sup>80</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 9 August 1999 in FBIS-WEU-1999-0809

<sup>81</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 6 October 1999 in FBIS-WEU-1999-1006

<sup>82</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 27 October 1999 in FBIS-WEU-1999-1027, Anatolia (Ankara), 31 January 2002 in FBIS-NES-2002-0131 and Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran External Service (Tehran), 30 July 2001 in FBIS-NES-2001-0730

understanding on security and border issues was to be signed between the two states on October 2001.<sup>83</sup>

Coming back to the PKK issue, Turkey continued its pressure on Iran at the beginning of 2000, which was supported by the *Hezbollah* operations and Turkish claims of Iran's support of Islamic fundamentalism in Turkey. As previously mentioned, Turkey used the issue of 'Iranian support for Islamic movements in Turkey' as a card to completely end Iran's support to the PKK. Turkish media expressed reports claiming that suicide bombers of the PKK were being trained in Iran and weapons of the organization were transferred from Iran to northern Iraq.<sup>84</sup> Turkey asked Iran to take more measures against the PKK.<sup>85</sup>

In August 2000, Khatemi sent a message to his counterpart Sezer, expressing that every effort would be made to solve the security problems between the two countries.<sup>86</sup> Turkey once again sent a file including documentary evidence that showed Iranian support for the PKK and *Hezbollah*.<sup>87</sup> During İsmail Cem's visit to Iran on February 2001, the sides reached a consensus on cooperation against the PKK and *Hezbollah*. Kharrazi assured Cem that foreign elements in Iran, which might make Turkey uneasy, would be expelled and none would be allowed to operate against Turkey in Iran.<sup>88</sup> Finally, on October 2001, Muzaffer Ecemis, Interior Ministry Undersecretary of Turkey, stated at the end of the Eight Meeting of the Higher Security Commission that there was not any border conflict or territorial

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<sup>83</sup> IRNA (Tehran), 23 October 2001 in FBIS-NES-2001-1023

<sup>84</sup> *Milliyet* (Istanbul), 5 January 2000 in FBIS-WEU-2000-0106

<sup>85</sup> Iran News (Tehran), 16 January 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0116

<sup>86</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 23 August 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0823

<sup>87</sup> *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), 27 August 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0827

<sup>88</sup> *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), 13 February 2001 in FBIS-NES-2001-0213

dispute between Turkey and Iran. He mentioned mutual help in their fight against terrorism, referring to the *Mujaheddin-i Khalq*, which is the strongest opposition armed organization against Iran.<sup>89</sup>

### **2.3. Iranian Regime Opponents in Turkey**

*Mujaheddin-I Khalq Organization* (MKO) has been the strongest opposition movement against the Islamic regime in Iran. Iran accused this organization of armed activities, which resulted in various bombings, and of assassinating Iranian politicians. The Iranian authorities constantly registered complaints about the presence of the militants of this organization among the Iranian refugees in Turkey.

The Iranian refugees in Turkey, who are anywhere between 500 000 to 1 million changing according to different sources,<sup>90</sup> mostly escaped from Iran after the revolution of 1979. Iran charged Turkish authorities of not taking necessary measures against the MKO militants among the refugees.

On the other side, there are allegations that Iran sent some total of 10 000 agents to Turkey at different times in order to contain and intimidate the Iranians in Turkey.<sup>91</sup> Over the past two decades, more than 200 Iranian dissidents were killed in

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<sup>89</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 24 October 2001 in FBIS-NES-2001-1024

<sup>90</sup> Karmon, p.8 and Olson,p.885.

<sup>91</sup> Hürriyet (Istanbul), 18 May 2000 in Olson, p.885.

Turkey.<sup>92</sup> More dramatically, it was alleged that Iran provided its agents diplomatic passports to fight against the MKO militants in Turkey. In October 1988, four Iranian diplomats were caught while attempting to kidnap an Iranian refugee in the trunk of a car, which resulted in a diplomatic scandal. Turkey refused to return the kidnappers who were sentenced to two years in prison. The tension increased with the mutual expulsion of some diplomats.<sup>93</sup>

On June 1994, Turkish security forces captured 16 MKO members and refused their request of political asylum.<sup>94</sup> Turkish officials expressed their decisiveness not to allow any organization working against its neighbors within its territories, while expecting the same from its neighbors. However, Tehran alleged again that Turkey allowed the MKO rally on its. Iranian News Agency (IRNA) reported that it was the first time Ankara had authorized an anti-Iranian demonstration. Tehran summoned the Turkish ambassador to its Foreign Ministry and warned about the affair.<sup>95</sup> There were not any significant problems related with that matter after this. But each time Turkey held up the issue of the PKK problem, Iran raised the issue of the MKO and wanted Turkey to take necessary measures against the organization.

Through the 1990s, Turkey condoned the existence of the Iranian agents and the Turkish security forces hardly investigated the murders of Iranian refugees. Mehmet Ali Birand, a prominent journalist in Turkey, suggested that requirement of visas for Iranians would be a sufficient way to control the agent traffic between Iran

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<sup>92</sup> Olson, p.885

<sup>93</sup> Criss, p.19

<sup>95</sup> AFP (Paris), 12 February 1996 in FBIS-NES-96-030

and Turkey. However, he argued that Iran would retaliate by requiring visas for Turks, which would result in impeding Turkish and international truck transport via Iran to the Gulf countries.<sup>96</sup> Another argument was that Turkey hoped for less Iranian support for the PKK in return.<sup>97</sup>

One way or another, Turkey and Iran seem nowadays to agree on cooperation against terrorism. At the end of the Eight Meeting of the Higher Security Commission, the sides signed a memorandum of understanding. Turkish representative, Muzaffer Ecemiş, presented this cooperation in his speech in the meeting: “While PKK has been staging terrorist actions against Turkey’s public order. MKO has been staging terrorist actions against Iran’s public order. Cooperation on fight against these organizations will continue with determination.”<sup>98</sup>

Such dynamic nature of relations was not bound only with bilateral relations. Developments in the regional context in the 1990s such as the formation of the newly independent states in the Caucasus and the Central Asia, Turkish-Israeli cooperation and Iran’s armament policies effected the course of the relations.

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<sup>96</sup> *Hürriyet* (Istanbul), 18 May 2000 Olson, p.885

<sup>97</sup> *Radikal* (Istanbul), 29 May 2000 in Olson, p.885

<sup>98</sup> *Anatolia* (Ankara), 24 October 2001 in FBIS-NES-2001-1024



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **REGIONAL ISSUES**

#### **3.1. Turkish-Iranian Rivalry and Cooperation in the Caucasus and Central Asia**

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the formation of the newly independent states (NIS) in the Caucasus and the Central Asia created an area of both rivalry and cooperation between Iran and Turkey, both of which had territorial, historical, cultural and economic links with these states. Turkey perceived this situation as an opportunity to reestablish its brotherhood links with the new Turkic republics, which would bring political, cultural and economic cooperation. Turkish policy towards the NIS in the early 1990s was called Pan-Turkist. On the other hand, Iran emphasized shared religious beliefs, which led its policy to be called as Pan-Islamist. Iran perceived the new situation as an opportunity to leave its isolation from the international arena by using these states as a corridor to open to the world political and economic markets.

Both Iran and Turkey portrayed their policies towards the region as complementary and non-threatening. Nevertheless, none of them was convinced by one another's claim of peaceful intentions and modest regional objectives.<sup>1</sup> Both of them were the founding members of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and offered cooperation around this

organization. However, even in the ECO summit of 1992 in Tehran, they went their separate ways. Tehran announced the formation of Caspian Sea Littoral Zone and Turkey responded with the formation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Council.<sup>2</sup>

Iranian primary advantage was its geopolitics, which provided a route for these republics to open to the world markets through Iran. Iranian president Rafsanjani mentioned this in a speech in 1992, calling to the leaders of the new republics: “Cooperation should certainly be carried out via Iran. For links between the North and the South, the east and the west, these countries and Europe, Europe and Asia, everything should cross Iran-oil and gas pipelines, railways, communication routes and international airports.’<sup>3</sup>

However, US opposition, the failure of the pan-Islamic approach and the weak Iranian businessmen constituted disadvantages for Iran. Firstly, the US perceived an influential Iran in the region as a threat to its interests. This constituted the primary disadvantage of Iran in the competition in the region. On the other hand, the US supported secular and democratic Turkey in this rivalry.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, Iranian pan-Islamist policy was not welcomed in these countries. The city people who were highly educated and had the influences of Soviet atheism were not sensitive to Islamic values. Additionally, the Hanefi sect of Islam was widespread in these republics (except Azerbaijan), therefore

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<sup>1</sup> John Calabrese, “Turkey and Iran: Limits of a Stable Relationship,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 25, no.1 (1998): p.11.

<sup>2</sup> Gulshan Dietl, “Iran in the Emerging Greater Middle East,” *Copenhagen Peace Research Institute* (1999): p.19 and Bülent Aras, “İran’ın Değişen Güvenlik Dengesi,” *Avrasya Dosyası* 3, no.3. (1996): p.172.

<sup>3</sup> Dietl, p.18.

Shia version of Iranian Islam could not find a base to expand in these countries.<sup>5</sup> Criticizing Iranian foreign policy towards the NIS in the early 1990s, Dr. Hermidas Bavand, an Iranian political analyst stated in the *Tel Hayat-e Now* daily : ` Instead of supplying the Central Asian states with the things they really wanted, Iran began to provide them with doctrinaire value-based commodities, and this process created a negative perception in these countries.”<sup>6</sup> On November 1992, Uzbek President, İslam Kerimov, called the leaders of the NIS to defend themselves against a pan-Islamic attempt from the south.<sup>7</sup> With the lessons of these experiences, and leaving aside Islamic approaches, Iran began to identify itself as a party to the economic rivalry in the region. Moreover, Iran supported the existing governments in the conflicts between the governments and the Islamic opponent forces.<sup>8</sup> Thirdly, Iranian businessmen could not succeed as actors in the economic rivalry. They were not supported enough by the Iranian government. The Iranian financial system, which was not in accordance with the international norms, created an obstacle for the Iranian businessmen. Additionally, Iranian industry was far from high technology, which fell short of satisfying the needs of these states.<sup>9</sup>

Besides the opportunities, the new situation in the former Soviet south created some dangers for Iran. On the international level, Iran feared that the US would fill the power gap in the region after Soviet domination. On the

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<sup>4</sup> İhsan Çolak, “Değişen Stratejiler Işığında İran-Türk Cumhuriyetleri İlişkilerinde Yeni Gelişmeler,” *Avrasya Dosyası* 5, no.3. (1999): p.212.

<sup>5</sup> Edmund Herzig, *Iran and the Former Soviet South* (London: the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995), 53.

<sup>6</sup> Hermidas Bavand, “We are now adept experts in letting go of opportunities,” *Tehran Hayat-e Now*, 24 October 2001

<sup>7</sup> Aras (1996), p.170.

<sup>8</sup> Çolak, p.212.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.214.

regional level, Iran was anxious about inter ethnic violence which could damage regional stability. Furthermore, Iran perceived the national sentiment among the Turkic peoples of the NIS as a potential threat to its internal stability and territorial integrity.<sup>10</sup> This was the point, which made the perceived Turkish pan-Turkist policies as violating Iran's interests. Turkish policies overlapped with Azerbaijan's president Abulfalz Elchibey's pro-Turkish policies.<sup>11</sup> In fact, the Azeri population located in the north of Iran was the other source of Iranian anxiety. Elchibey's irredentist approaches pronouncing the unification of Azeris of Azerbaijan with Azeris of Iran intensified Iran's anxiety. The new president Heidar Aliiev followed more realistic and balanced policies towards Turkey and Iran considering his country's economic benefits as a priority. But he was concerned about Islamic radicalism like Uzbekistan and the other Central Asian Republics, where there is a general view that Iran is behind such movements.<sup>12</sup> Simultaneously, Turkey tuned down its pan-Turkist rhetoric, which after all had been geared towards domestic consumption verbalized by certain politicians. All these developments lightened Iran's anxiety over its Azeri population.

Not its pan-Turkist approach of the early 1990s, but its secular and westernized identity made Turkey more attractive for the NIS as a model. Turkey was the first country to recognize the independence of these states. Turkey wanted to export its experience of democracy and market economy to these states. Instead of Iranian alternatives, the NIS preferred the Turkish

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<sup>10</sup> Herzig, p.3.

<sup>11</sup> Bölükbaşı, p.3.

<sup>12</sup> Hüseyin Bağcı, "Cem's Visit to Iran: Winning a Small Battle" The Institute of Foreign Policy , Ankara, 7 March 2002.

religious guidance to teach Islam to their citizens and adopted the Latin alphabet.<sup>13</sup> The new situation was an opportunity for Turkish economy to enter new markets. Also, the oil and gas reserves of the region would decrease Turkey's dependency on the Middle Eastern oil and gas.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, these countries wanted to free themselves from Russian dependence. Accordingly, Turkey gave them credits between 1992 and 1994 when they were in crisis. Also, Turkish companies were successful in their investments in the NIS.<sup>15</sup> All these led Turkey and the NIS to get closer in the first half of the 1990s. However, the Turkish economy could not meet the expectations of these countries in the following years to open to the world. Simultaneously, Russia got more actively involved in the rivalry and had the lion's share of the economic relationship with the NIS.<sup>16</sup> As a result, Turkish influence decreased in the mid 1990s.

The issues of the sales and transportation of the mineral resources of the region dominated the following years. Rich oil and gas reserves lie under the Caspian Sea, mostly oil in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, and gas in Turkmenistan. The proven reserves are 16 billion barrels of oil and 8.3 billion cubic meters of gas, and the possible reserves are much greater: 163 billion barrels of oil and 17.6 billion cubic meters of gas.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Mehmet Dikkaya, "Orta Asya'da Yeni Büyük Oyun Türkiye, Rusya ve İran" *Avrasya Dosyası* 5, no.3. (1999): p.197.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p.198.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.195.

<sup>17</sup> Patrick Clawson, "Iran and Caspian Oil and Gas," *Perceptions* 2, no.4. (December 1997-February 1998): p.1

There are some motivations in Turkey and Iran to take part in Caspian mineral resources competition. On the Turkish side, its growing energy needs created a problem for Turkish decision makers and Turkey wanted to solve this problem mainly by natural gas purchases.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, Turkey wanted to end its dependency on certain countries and to diversify its suppliers of natural gas mainly with purchases from new suppliers, Turkmenistan and Iran. Secondly, Turkey wanted to lessen the dependence of the NIS on Russia. Thus, Turkey was against the Russian proposal to transport the mineral resources, which would increase the Russian domination in the region.<sup>19</sup> On the Iranian side, Iran wanted to avoid substantial Turkish and western presence in the Caspian, and accordingly offered various cooperation schemes to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan to jointly extract and export their oil and gas.<sup>20</sup> Iran was the most attractive route regarding its geographically advantageous situation, which connects the Caspian basin to Persian Gulf and then to the world markets.<sup>21</sup>

The signature of a \$ 8 billion production sharing deal with the Azerbaijani state oil company SOCAR on 20 September 1994, by a consortium of oil companies, led by the British Petroleum Company (BP),<sup>22</sup> attracted attention to the region. According to the contract, Iran was isolated from the

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<sup>18</sup> Turkey's gas consumption was planned to increase from 8 billion cubic meters/year in 1996 to 60 billion cubic meters/year in 2010. See Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Bölükbaşı, "The Controversy Over the Caspian sea Mineral Resources: Conflicting perceptions, Clashing Interests" *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, iss.3, p.1

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p.2.

<sup>21</sup> Ali Hashemi Bahremani, "Oil and gas policies of the Islamic republic of Iran" *Insight Turkey* 4, no.1(2001), p.35.

<sup>22</sup> The 30 year contract called for the production of 80 000 barrels per day by 1997, output was expected to reach an eventual peak of 700 b/d. Other investors are American Amoco (17%), Pennzoil (4.8%), Unocal (9.5%) and Exxon (5%), Russia's Lukoil (10%), Norway's Statoil

project. Iran's relations with Azerbaijan were not good during President Abulfalz Elchibey's tenure. But the new President, Heidar Aliiev, stated after he came to power, that they wanted to have mutually beneficial relations with Iran in the fields of oil production and marketing. Accordingly, Aliiev transferred 5% out of SOCAR's 20% share to Iran. However, because of the objections of the US administration, the consortium turned down this transfer.<sup>23</sup> This attracted the reaction of Iran and thus, Iran declared that it was then on the Russian side regarding the illegality of the Azeri oil project, referring to the problem of the legal status of the Caspian Sea.<sup>24</sup>

The US objection isolated Iran from big projects of oil extraction and transportation of mineral resources. However, Iran succeeded with its 'swap formula'. Iran's oil fields are located in the southwest of the country and along the Gulf coast, whereas the main refining centers are in the north in Tabriz, Tehran and Arak. Additionally, the domestic market for oil is mostly in the north since urban centers and industrial areas are around the Caspian rim. Iran and Kazakhstan signed an agreement in 1997, under which the latter would sell 2 million tons of oil to Iran annually, which would be consumed in the north of the country. In return, Iran would sell an equal amount of oil from its production in the south to the buyers of Kazakh oil.<sup>25</sup> Tehran also ended up a natural gas swap agreement on August 1996. Accordingly, a 40 inch gas pipeline would be built from the onshore Turkmen gas field of Korpoje to north Iran and the initial annual capacity would be 2 billion cubic meters, but

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(8.5%), Japanese Itochu (7.45%), the British Ramco (2%), Turkey's TPAO (6.75%), Saudi Arabia's Delta (1.6%) and Azerbaijan's SOCAR (10%). See Bölükbaşı, p.2.

<sup>23</sup> Bölükbaşı, p.3

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.4

would rise to 8-9 billion cubic meters depending on consumption in northern Iran.<sup>26</sup> Iran would no longer need to ship its own natural gas from the south to the north of the country. Tehran's second success was the opening of the Mashad-Saraks-Tejen railway on May 1996, which links Iran with Turkmenistan. Iranian President Rafsanjani named it 'The Silk Road Railway' and it linked Iran not only with Turkmenistan but with all the Central Asian NIS.<sup>27</sup> Turkey linked its domestic network by constructing a 100 kilometer long railway in order to have a railway link with the Central Asian markets.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, Iran was happy with the Turkish link, since it served Iran's position to be the sole non-CIS window of Central Asia to the rest of the world.

What Iran wanted enthusiastically to do through cooperation with Turkey was to sell its gas and to transport Turkmen gas over Iran and Turkey to the European markets. In 1994, former US Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, brought his own US-CIS Ventures and Wavemeg Companies together with Turkey, Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Russia in an international council. His project foresaw a 3500 km. export pipeline for Turkmen gas through Iran and Turkey with the aim of reaching European markets. The initial throughput would be around 2 billion cubic meters and would reach 28 billion cubic meters by 2020.<sup>29</sup>

The future looked bright for Turkey and Iran. However, the project was opposed by the US administration because of Iran's participation. Despite the

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<sup>25</sup> Dietl, p.18.

<sup>26</sup> Herzig, p.44 and Bölükbaşı, p.9.

<sup>27</sup> Bölükbaşı, p.10

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



US objection, Turkey and Iran insisted on finding out ways to cooperate on this project. Turkey signed an agreement in 1996 with Iran to buy Iranian gas. The US called on Turkey to drop the deal to buy gas from Iran and instead take gas from Central Asia via an alternative route. The US argued that Turkish-Iranian deal was contradictory to the D'Amato Act of the US in 1996, which forbade investments more than 40 million dollars in Iran.<sup>30</sup> On May 1997, Turkey concluded an agreement with Turkmenistan, under which 3 billion cubic meters of gas would be brought to Turkey.<sup>31</sup> On May 1997, Turkmenistan proposed the Turkmenistan, Iran, Turkey, Europe project in the ECO summit, which envisaged a 2 177 km. long gas pipeline with an annual capacity of up to 30 billion cubic meters of gas.<sup>32</sup> Then on July 1997, it was announced that the US partially lifted the embargo and decided not to hinder the project.<sup>33</sup> The sides intensified talks on the project. On 13 August 1997, Turkmen President, Saparmurad Turkmenbasi, announced that the time and term for the beginning of the construction of the Turkmenistan- Iran- Turkey-Europe gas pipeline would be decided within a few days.<sup>34</sup> On December 1997, the sides signed an agreement on the construction of the pipeline.<sup>35</sup> However, things did not go well further. Again the US factor came on the scene. On December 1998, Turkmenbasi took the US administration's backed side and the Eurasian corridor for the pipeline route.<sup>36</sup> Reports claimed that the US administration did not want Iran to be influential in energy lines as it considers Iran as a rouge

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<sup>29</sup> Herzig, p.44 and Ibid. p.9.

<sup>30</sup> AFP (Paris), 5 March 1997 in FBIS-WEU-97-064

<sup>31</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 1 May 1997 in FBIS-WEU-97-121

<sup>32</sup> Interfax (Moscow), 14 May 1997 in FBIS-SOV-97-134

<sup>33</sup> ITAR-TASS (Moscow), 31 July 1997 in FBIS-SOV-97-212

<sup>34</sup> Interfax (Moscow), 13 August 1997 in FBIS-SOV-97-225

<sup>35</sup> Interfax (Moscow), 28 December 1997 in FBIS-SOV-97-362

<sup>36</sup> Interfax (Moscow), 24 December 1998 in FBIS-SOV-98-358

state.<sup>37</sup> This increased the antagonism of Iranians towards the US. Iranians criticized the US of ignoring economic feasibility.<sup>38</sup> As a result, Turkish-Iranian cooperation remained bound only with Turkish purchase of Iranian gas and could not expand to larger projects.

### **3.2. The Effects of Turkish-Israeli Military Cooperation**

Turkey followed a balanced policy towards its relations with the Middle Eastern countries during the Cold War period. Regarding the Palestinian issue, Turkish foreign policy was mostly in accordance with the Arab view, but it was also careful to respect the Israeli state, which was a party to the Western alliance in the region. With the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the Oslo peace process, Turkey began to normalize and improve its relations with Israel. On 31 December 1991, bilateral relations increased to the ambassadorial level.<sup>39</sup> Turkey made the first official visit on June 1992 by Turkish Tourism Minister, Abdulkadir Ates, then on October 1992 by Turkish Foreign Minister, Hikmet Cetin.<sup>40</sup> On these visits, Turkey focused on improving economic relations. Israel reciprocated to these with the visit of President Ezer Weizmann on January 1994.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 14 December 1998 in FBIS-WEU-98-348

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Dr. Piruz Mojtahedzadeh in *Resalat* (Tehran), 23 February 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0313

<sup>39</sup> Kamer Kasım, "Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri" in *21. Yüzyılın Eşiğinde Türk Dış Politikası*, ed. İdris Bal (İstanbul: Alfa Yayıncılık, 2001), p.570.

<sup>40</sup> Meliha B. Altunışık, *Türkiye ve Ortadoğu Tarih Kimlik Güvenlik* (İstanbul: Boyut Kitapları, 1999), p.192.

<sup>41</sup> Kasım, p.571.

The turning point in the context of the relations was on October 1994, with the visit of Turkish Prime Minister, Tansu Ciller. In this visit, relations extended to security matters. Turkey signed an agreement on a modernization project of Turkish Air Force and offered further cooperation against terrorism and on intelligence. Accordingly, the sides signed the Military Training Cooperation Agreement on February 1996, and the Defense Cooperation Agreement on August 1996.<sup>42</sup>

The security perceptions of Turkey were the main factors, which led to cooperate with Israel. Turkey perceived the Middle Eastern countries as a threat to its territorial integrity and secular regime regarding their support to the PKK and the expansion of radical Islam in Turkey. The lack of authority in northern Iraq and the potential threats from Syria and Iran, and the permission of Syria for Greece to use its air space in a war with Turkey, caused anxiety in Turkey. In the calculation of these security perceptions and the decision to cooperate with Israel, the military was the leading institution in Turkey.<sup>43</sup> While Turkish security calculations were mostly directed towards Syria, Israeli security perceptions aimed at Iran.<sup>44</sup> Claims that Iran was producing weapons of mass destruction and Iranian support of Islamic movements among Palestinian groups were the main sources of the Israeli anxiety.<sup>45</sup>

Turkey declared officially many times that this cooperation did not target any third party. However, this cooperation was perceived as a threat by

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<sup>42</sup> Altunışık, p.199.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p.196.

<sup>44</sup> Bülent Aras, "İsrail-İran-Türkiye Üçlüsünde Gelişen İlişkiler," *Avrasya Dosyası* 5, no.1. (1999): p.203.

Iran and Syria to their security.<sup>46</sup> It was also criticized in Turkey that it produced a new threat by increasing its neighbors' insecurity and that it narrowed its space of maneuver in its political relations in the Middle East<sup>47</sup>. Regarding Turkish-Iranian relations, Turkish-Israeli cooperation brought negative effects. The Islamic Republic of Iran has always perceived Israel as a threat to the Islamic world in general and to the Islamic Republic in particular. The Iranian ruling elite claim that Israel, with its Zionist policies, aims to weaken the Muslim countries. Iranians call on the Muslim world to cooperate against the Zionist aims of Israel.<sup>48</sup> Despite the changes in Iranian foreign policy with Khatemi, there is not any signal of softening towards Israel. Within such an Iranian perception of Israel, Turkish-Israeli cooperation attracted reaction in Iran. What disturbed Iran regarding the cooperation agreement were mainly the training flights of the Israeli pilots in the southeastern region of Turkey, and intelligence cooperation between Turkey and Israel. Iran perceived this as a threat to its border security, claiming that the Israelis would secretly observe the Iranian territory.<sup>49</sup> Turkish Foreign Ministry officials announced on September 1998, as they did several times previously, that developing Turkish Israeli relations was not directed against any country in the region.<sup>50</sup> Then on June 1999, Turkish Foreign Minister, Hikmet Çetin, announced that the agreements did not mean a military pact, instead they were about technical

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p.205.

<sup>46</sup> AFP (Paris), 16 June 1996 in FBIS-NES-96-117

<sup>47</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik* (İstanbul: Küre yayınları,2001), p.422 and Altunışık, p.209.

<sup>48</sup> Aras, p.201 and for example, Ali Hamaney's statements about Israel see AFP (Paris), 7 September 1994 in FBIS-NES-94-174

<sup>49</sup> Aras, p.203.

<sup>50</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 9 September 1998 in FBIS-WEU-98-252

cooperation issues.<sup>51</sup> However, these announcements did not satisfy either Iran or other neighbors of Turkey.

An Iranian journalist commented on the agreement that it had a considerable negative effect on the relations of Turkey with its neighbors and other Muslim countries. He also expressed growing anxiety that Israel could use this connection to expand its influence on the Caucasus and Central Asia.<sup>52</sup> Iranian media alleged that Israel prevented the improvement of Turkish-Iranian relations. They claimed that the sources of charges in Turkey about the so-called support of Iran to the PKK and the delay of the purchase of Iranian gas by Turkey were Israeli related.<sup>53</sup> Iranian Foreign Minister, Kemal Kharrazi, expressed Iranian concern about Israeli presence in Turkey to his counterpart Ismail Cem in his visit to Turkey on January 2000.<sup>54</sup> The claims in Iranian media continued on May 2000 that anti-Iranian campaign in Turkey, regarding the Iranian connection in the assassinations and the *Hezbollah*<sup>55</sup>, was planned and supported by Israel in order to prevent new Iranian foreign policy aimed at establishing better relations with its neighbors. The reports claimed that Israel wanted to create a new regional crisis and to prevent reactions against its military campaign towards the new *intifadah* of the Palestinians.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 30 January 1999 in FBIS-WEU-99-030

<sup>52</sup> Mohammed Reza Esmail-zadeh, "Indecent relations" in *Resalat* (Tehran), 26 October 1999 in FBIS-LAT-1999-1205

<sup>53</sup> *Tehran Times* (Tehran), 17 January 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0117

<sup>54</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 18 January 2000 in FBIS-WEU-2000-0118

<sup>55</sup> Turkish journalists and academicians who were the defenders of the secular Atatürkist regime of Turkey were killed in Turkey during 1990s, the suspects of the murders confessed to be trained in Iran and supported financially by mullahs. *Hezbollah* was one of the leading ones of the terrorist organizations which were accused of these assassinations and of being supported by Iran.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Dr. Piruz Mojtahedzadeh, "America, Israel and Turkey axis working actively against Iran" *Tehran Iran* (Tehran), 11 June 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0619 and Alireza La'ali, "Anti Iranian moves by Turkey aim to rescue Israel from regional crisis," *Mashad Khorasan*, 20 May 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0804

The concerns of Iran intensified with the first joint maneuvers by Turkey, Israel and the US in June 2001. Iranian reports argued that Israeli intelligence agents and military advisors were collecting information about Turkey's neighbors by using airspace and territorial waters of Turkey. Iranians claimed that Turkey was being used for the expansionist policies of Israel and added that this would have negative consequences for Turkey's security as well.<sup>57</sup>

It is obvious that Turkish-Israeli cooperation created new problems for Turkey. Iran knows that this cooperation is not an alliance or a pact. But its anxiety is about Israeli presence on the Turkish border with Iran and its intelligence activities. Turkish officials' announcements that this cooperation did not aim at any third party are not enough to end Iranian concerns. Turkey should show some concrete signs about the context of the agreements and the joint maneuvers to alleviate Iranian concerns. Otherwise, it would remain as a problem in the minds of Iranian decision-makers regarding their relations with Turkey.

### **3.3. Iran's Armament Program: Missiles and Nuclear Weaponization**

Iran's international isolation after the 1979 revolution led it to have much difficulty in replacing its military losses during the Iran- Iraq war. In order not to live the same difficulties again, Iran sought to develop its own military industries and to reduce its dependency on foreign arms suppliers.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *Tehran Times*, 17 June 2001 in FBIS-NES-2001-0617

<sup>58</sup> Michael Eisenstadt, "Living with a Nuclear Iran", *Survival* 41, no.3 (1999), p.125.

The desire of Iranians and the Iranian state to become a regional power on the one hand, and perception of threats from Iraq, the Soviet Union and then Turkey, Afghanistan and Azerbaijan,<sup>59</sup> led Iranian defense policy makers to follow a policy of building a strong military. Regarding Turkish- Iranian relations, Turkish military cooperation with Israel, which provided Israel to have an effective presence on the Turkish border with Iran, increased the Iranian perception of threat from the Turkish border.

According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei is commander-in chief of the armed forces, which consists of three main components:<sup>60</sup> 1. The regular military 2. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Forces (IRGC) 3. The Law Enforcement Forces (LEF). (See article 110 of the Iran Constitution)<sup>61</sup>. There are differences between the approaches of the regular military and the IRGC towards the military program. The regular military had a traditional approach to war, with a balanced emphasis on hardware, technology and the human element. By contrast, the IRGC emphasized the human factor and the missile forces and non-conventional weapons programs.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>For details of the threat perceptions of Iran, see Michael Eisenstadt, "The armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran: An Assessment", *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 5, no.1 (2001), p.3 and 4, {e-journal} [http://ciaonet.org/olj/meria/meria1\\_eim01.html](http://ciaonet.org/olj/meria/meria1_eim01.html)

<sup>60</sup> The regular military is responsible for defending Iran's borders and maintaining internal order, the IRGC is responsible for protecting the regime and the LEF is for domestic security. The clerical regime distrusted the regular army because of its association with the deposed Shah. The IRGC is created as a guardian of the regime and the leadership of LEF consists of IRGC officers.

<sup>61</sup> Iran Constitution, p.30; available from <http://www.aghayan.com.html>; Internet; accessed 23 April 2002.

<sup>62</sup> Eisenstadt 2, p.6.

On the other hand, Iran's conventional military capabilities are relatively limited. Iran suffered from a decade of war and revolution, and two decades of financial hardship. Despite its significant amount of purchases of conventional weapons<sup>63</sup>, its conventional capability is relatively weak, taken into consideration the size of the country and the magnitude of its security problems, compared with the capacity of its neighbors.<sup>64</sup> Given its financial problems, non- conventional weaponization, especially nuclear armament, seems the attractive way for Iran to become a military power without destroying its economy.<sup>65</sup>

On August 1992, Iran agreed with Russia to finish the Bushehr power plant, which had started in 1975, but was halted by the 1979 revolution and on June 1995 the sides again agreed to install one VVER-1000 reactor in Bushehr<sup>66</sup>. Uncontrolled nuclear materials and personnel donated with nuclear weaponization know- how after the disintegration of the USSR, intensified the doubts. Despite the announcement of both sides that this program aimed at civilian purposes and Iran was a party of Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), there grew great anxiety among the US and its allies in the region, including Turkey, that Iran might go nuclear. The dual-use of nuclear technology, which can be converted easily from civilian to military purposes, increased the anxieties. After the disastrous experiences with Iraq, it was understood that IAEA

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p.8.

<sup>64</sup> For details see "Nations with Largest Armed Forces, By Active-Duty Troop Strength" in *World Almanac and Book of Facts* (1995), p.215, 1.chart

<sup>65</sup> Eisenstadt 2, p.3.

<sup>66</sup> Michael Eisenstadt, "Russian Arms and Technology Transfer to Iran," *Proliferation Brief* 4, no.5 (2001), p.2.



inspectors can be deceived because of the dual use of the nuclear technology.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, the two new provisions of the IAEA protocol known as Program 3+2 were designed to close this loophole. However, Iran refused to ratify these new provisions.<sup>68</sup> This increases concerns about Iranian nuclear program.

CIA director, James Woolsey warned on September 1994 that Iran might create a nuclear weapon of its own within the following eight to ten years.<sup>69</sup> What increased the anxiety in Turkey was the missile program of Iran. The backbone of Iran's strategic missile forces consists of 300 Shahab-1 (with a range of 320 km) and 100 Shahab-2 missiles (with a range of 500 km). Iran conducted the tests of Shahab-3 missiles (with a range of 1300 km), and claimed to develop Shahab-4 (with an estimated range of 2000 km) and draw up plans for a Shahab-5 missile (with an expected range of 5000 to 10000 km).<sup>70</sup> Iran's missiles can reach major population centers in Turkey, Israel, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the smaller Gulf States. These missiles can be used with chemical, biological and nuclear warheads and this poses a strong threat to Iran's neighbors, including Turkey. Iranian officials announced that these entire armament programs were for defense and would never have any aggressive intentions.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Mustafa Kibaroglu, "Is Iran Going Nuclear?" *Foreign Policy* (Turkey) 10, no.3-4 (1996), p.36.

<sup>68</sup> Geoffrey Kemp, "Iran: Can the United States Do a Deal?" *The Washington Quarterly* 24, no.1 (2001): p.117.

<sup>69</sup> ITAR-TASS (Moscow), 27 September 1994 in FBIS-SOV-94-188

<sup>70</sup> Eisenstadt 1, p.124 and Richard Speier, "Iran Missile Sanctions" *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (1998), p.1.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Mohammad Kazem Khonsari, advisor to the Iranian foreign minister, by Ali Anuzla, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* (London), 28 November 1996 in FBIS-NES-96-231

Despite the US opposition and the Iran Missile Proliferation Sanctions of Act of 1998, Russia insists on continuing its help to Iran in terms of conventional and nuclear sales.<sup>72</sup> Turkish officials announced their worries about Iran's missile and nuclear programs. For example, Turkish Foreign Ministry stated on July 1998 that they were closely monitoring the Iranian missile programs.<sup>73</sup> This issue did not reach a level of crisis between the two countries and is not Turkey's number one foreign policy priority yet. But it remains as a potential source of instability in the region and the bilateral relations of the two countries.

As a result, we see that the relations went on an uncertain ground. Ups and downs in bilateral and regional relations did not allow a stable ground on which better economic ties and cooperation would be established. Turkey's purchase of Iranian gas was the only significant development in economic relations. However, the development process of this agreement shows that other political matters seriously effected the operation of the agreement.

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<sup>72</sup> Ariel Cohen, "Russian-Iran Arms deals may threaten the neighborhood," *Insight Turkey* 3, no.1 (2001), p.131-132, and Speier, p.1.

<sup>73</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 25 July 1998 in FBIS-WEU-98-206

## CHAPTER 4

### ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Commerce between Turkey and Iran had flourished during the Iran-Iraq War (1981-1988) as a result of high amount of increase in Turkish exports to Iran. Although contracts for merchandise trade were signed in the early 1990s, these could not be put into practice because of the accumulation of large debts by Iran to Turkish businesses and imposition of strict curbs on imports by Iran to conserve foreign exchange.<sup>1</sup>

Years	Exports	% in T.T.E.	Imports	% in T.T.I.	Difference	% in I.T.E.	% in I.T.I.
1989	561	4, 82	233	1, 47	328		
1990	495	3, 81	492	2, 20	3		
1991	487	3, 58	91	0, 43	396		
1992	455	3, 09	365	1, 59	90		
1993	290	1, 88	367	1, 24	-377		
1994	250	1, 38	692	2, 97	-442	3, 56	1, 81
1995	268	1, 23	689	1, 92	-421	3, 75	1, 93
1996	297	1, 27	806	1, 84	-509	3, 59	1, 82
1997	307	1, 16	646	1, 33	-339	3, 51	2, 16
1998	195	0, 72	433	0, 94	-238	3, 30	1, 36
1999	158	0, 59	635	1, 56	-477	3, 01	1, 24
2000	236	0, 84	816	1, 49	-580	2, 87	1, 65
2001	235	0, 78	880	1, 86	-655	3, 41	1, 33

In million dollars)

\*Turkey's exports to and imports from Iran

T.T.E.: Turkey's Total Exports

T.T.I.: Turkey's Total Imports

I.T.E. : Iran's Total Exports

I.T.I.: Iran's Total Imports

Sources: *Annuals of Foreign Trade* 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999 from Turkey's Undersecretariat of Foreign Trade, *Direction of Trade Statistics* (1995), *Direction of Trade Statistics* (2000), *Direction of Trade Statistics* (June 2002)

As it is shown in the table, Turkey's exports decreased in the 1990s while its imports were increasing. This is mostly because of the decrease in the exports of Turkish products because of the above-mentioned reasons and Turkey's dependency on oil imports from Iran. As a result, there is an increasing amount of deficit in Turkey's balance of payments in its economic relations with Iran.

The share of Iran in Turkey's total exports decreased from 4.82 % in 1989 to 0.59 % in 1999. Except the sharp decline in 1991 and sharp increase in 1994, the share of Iran in Turkey's total imports changes around 1.5% and 2 %. Iran was ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in 1996 and 18<sup>th</sup> in 1997 among the top countries in Turkey's exports. Turkey's share in Iranian exports and imports is much or less stable after 1994.<sup>2</sup>

Iran exports petroleum and petroleum products, natural gas, raw leather, zinc and some other minerals to Turkey. On the other hand, Turkey exports animal and vegetable oil, tyre, cotton fabric, plastics, and synthetic fibres to Iran.<sup>3</sup>

Turkish-Iranian relations went through Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Organization of the Islamic Conference Economic and Trade Cooperation, the Turkish-Iranian Joint Economic Committees and

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<sup>1</sup> John Calabrese, "Turkey and Iran: Limits of a Stable Relationship," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.25, iss.1. (1999): p.7

<sup>2</sup> *Foreign Trade of Turkey* 1996, Turkey's Undersecretariat of Foreign Trade; *Foreign Trade of Turkey* 1997, Turkey's Undersecretariat of Foreign Trade.

<sup>3</sup> *Türkiye'nin Ülkeler itibariyle Dış Ticareti ve Ülke Profilleri*. Ankara: Dış Ticaret Müsteşarlığı, 1998: p.212-213.

economic delegations' visits to each other. In addition to the memberships of Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, ECO enlarged geographically with the new memberships of the former Soviet Republics, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. This extension enabled the organization to act as a link among important areas of the Middle East, Central Asia and Caucasias.<sup>4</sup> However, neither Turkey and Iran nor the other members of the organization really tried and succeeded to turn the organization into a more functional one, which could result in development of economic relations.<sup>5</sup>

After a cool period of relations during 1997, a development trend began to be seen in the economic relations between Turkey and Iran. After the messages of willingness to cooperate from both sides and low level delegations' visits, attempts to cooperate became concrete with the visit of Iranian Foreign Minister, Kemal Kharrazi, to Turkey in January 2000.<sup>6</sup> Turkish Foreign Minister, Ismail Cem, responded to this with his visit to Iran with a group of Turkish businessmen in February 2001.<sup>7</sup> These visits coincided with the end of the gas pipeline problem and the start of gas purchase of Turkey from Iran.<sup>8</sup> Both sides define that moment as a turning point in Turkish- Iranian relations, which is supposed to result in better economic relations. Kemal Kharrazi mentioned this in his visit to Turkey: "A new page will be opened between the two countries. It will result in better economic

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<sup>4</sup> *Tehran Times* (Tehran), 22 November 1999 in FBIS-NES-1999-1122

<sup>5</sup> *Kayhan International* (Tehran), 10 June 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0615

<sup>6</sup> *Anatolia* (Ankara), 19 January 2000 in FBIS-WEU-2000-0119

<sup>7</sup> *Anatolia* (Ankara), 13 February 2001 in FBIS-NES-2001-0213

relations... Current trade volume between the two countries is far from the desired level.”<sup>9</sup> On the other side, Ali Osman Ulusoy, Deputy Chairman of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey(TOBB), said during the İsmail Cem’s visit to Iran: “ ...time has been lost in economic relations between Turkey and Iran... I believe that there will be a very good cooperation in the economic relations between the two countries.”<sup>10</sup> After the start of gas purchase from Iran, İsmail Cem pointed at the availability of the environment for the development of the relations in February 2002: “The time is now appropriate for Iran and Turkey to bolster bilateral political, economic and security cooperation.”<sup>11</sup> During these visits and negotiations, the Turkish side referred to opportunities for economic cooperation especially in transportation, transit trade, textile, construction, electronic equipment and household equipments<sup>12</sup>, while the Iranian side referred especially to crude oil, electricity, natural gas and energy transportation.<sup>13</sup> Iranian Tehran IRNA agency announced periodically the figures of the volume of trade between the two countries in 2001.<sup>14</sup> This demonstrates to some extent the increasing importance of Turkey in Iranian foreign trade.

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<sup>8</sup> Turkey and Iran signed a gas purchase agreement in 1996 which could not be started because of a series of problems. This issue will be explained in detail in the following paragraphs.

<sup>9</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 19 January 2000 in FBIS-WEU-2000-0119

<sup>10</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 13 February 2001 in FBIS-NES-2001-0213

<sup>11</sup> IRNA (Tehran), 19 February 2002 in FBIS-NES-2002-0219

<sup>12</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 13 February 2001 in FBIS-NES-2001-0213

<sup>13</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 26 January 2000 in FBIS-WEU-2000-0126

<sup>14</sup> For these announcements see IRNA (Tehran), 27 August 2001 in FBIS-NES-2001-0827 and IRNA (Tehran), 15 November 2001 in FBIS-NES-2001-1115 and IRNA (Tehran), 5 December 2001 in FBIS-NES-2001-1205 and IRNA (Tehran), 4 February 2002 in FBIS-NES-2002-0204 and IRNA (Tehran), 16 February 2002 in FBIS-NES-2002-0216 and IRNA (Tehran), 6 March 2002 in FBIS-NES-2002-0306

Signature of a protocol which abolished the transit passage fee in September 1998 also included some reforms in the border gate systems.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the two sides signed an agreement, which aimed at improvement of trade relations and increasing the level of commercial exchanges.<sup>16</sup> These were important steps which led to economic rapprochement between the two countries in the late 1990s. Both of these agreements were succeeded by the Iran-Turkey Joint Economic and Trade Cooperation Committees. These committees which deal more concretely with the issues and finalize them with agreements can play an important role in the further development of economic relations between the two countries.

## **Gas Agreement**

Turkey, with its growing population and developing industrialization and urbanization, fell into an energy deficit in the 1990s. Among the main energy sources of Turkey, natural gas was a cheaper alternative, which could decrease the costs of the industry and was better for the environment. Natural gas consumption of Turkey climbed steadily from 500 million cubic meters in 1987 to 6.6 billion cubic meters in 1995 and is expected to reach 30 billion cubic meters by 2005 and 40 billion by 2010.<sup>17</sup> Turkey bought 6 billion cubic meters of gas from Russia in 1996. Turkey wanted to diversify the suppliers of natural gas. In that regard, Iran was one of the leading alternatives of the natural gas suppliers for Turkey. After a series of negotiations, Turkish Prime

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<sup>15</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 10 September 1998 in FBIS-WEU-98-253

<sup>16</sup> IRIB Television First Program Network (Tehran), 28 January 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0128

<sup>17</sup> *Turkish Daily News* (Ankara), 13 August 1996 in FBIS-WEU-96-161

Minister, Necmettin Erbakan, signed a natural gas purchasing accord during his visit to Iran on 12 August 1996.<sup>18</sup> This was a \$23 billion agreement, according to which Turkey would begin to buy 3 billion cubic meters of gas in early 1999 and this amount would increase to 10 billion cubic meters in 2007. Both sides had to construct the necessary pipelines and terminals within their border till the starting date.

Each side had some motives in signing this accord. The motives of Turkey were as follows:

1. Turkey aimed to diversify the suppliers of natural gas, which would end dependence on one country and create a competitive environment that could decrease the cost of gas.<sup>19</sup>
2. Among the alternative countries of the suppliers of gas, Iran was a leading one with its growing capacity to produce natural gas. Iran owned 12 percent of the world's gas reserves.<sup>20</sup>
3. Iran had a geographical advantage in the transportation of gas in a cheaper and safer route in a possible earthquake compared to Russian and Turkmen alternatives<sup>21</sup>
4. The government planned to use the natural gas in the eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey as soon as possible and saw this project as an important factor in the development of these regions.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> "Gas Agreement" *Presidents and Prime Ministers*, vol.5, iss. 6 (Nov-Dec 96): p. 24

<sup>19</sup> *Turkish Daily News* (Ankara), 26 February 1996 in FBIS-WEU-96-044

<sup>20</sup> Ahmad Kazemi, "Turkey-Iran gas pipeline project seen as enhancing strategic relations" *Abrar*, 26 December 2001 in FBIS-NES-2002-0118

<sup>21</sup> Ibid and IRNA (Tehran), 15 January 2002 in FBIS-NES-2002-0115

<sup>22</sup> *Turkish Daily News* (Ankara), 22 August 1996 in FBIS-WEU-96-165



On the other hand, we can summarize the motives of Iran as:

1. Iran saw the experience of exporting its gas to Turkey, which is a member of NATO and an ally of the US, as a good model for neighboring countries such as Pakistan and Armenia which want Iranian gas, or such countries such as Kuwait and Qatar which desire Iranian water.<sup>23</sup>
2. Iran expected that this agreement would be a motivating factor, which would accelerate its economic relations with Turkey in other fields.<sup>24</sup>
3. Iran wanted to use Turkey as a gateway for a natural gas pipeline to European markets.<sup>25</sup> Iranian officials explicitly announced, just after the official start of the sale of gas to Turkey, that they desire to use the pipeline for exports to Europe as well.<sup>26</sup> Iran began to look for partnership with European firms to find markets for its gas in Europe and to compete with Russia and other suppliers of gas in Europe.<sup>27</sup>

Turkish Prime Minister, Necmettin Erbakan, said just after coming from his visit to Iran : “ ...we have entered a race with Rafsanjani on this issue... we will complete the construction of the natural gas pipeline connecting Van to the border within one year. Efforts will be exerted for the completion of a power plant in Van within one year.<sup>28</sup> However, things did not go as hoped as in these sentences. Gökhan Yardım, Director General of the state-run pipeline company (BOTAS), announced in April 1999 that Doğubeyazıt- Erzurum

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<sup>23</sup> *Iran News* (Tehran), 22 January 2002 in FBIS-NES-2002-0122

<sup>24</sup> *Anatolia* (Ankara), 7 November 2001 in FBIS-WEU-2001-1107

<sup>25</sup> New Agency WWW (Athens), 30 January 2002 in FBIS-WEU-2002-0131

<sup>26</sup> *Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Tehran), 22 January 2002 in FBIS-NES-2002-0121

<sup>27</sup> *IRNA* (Tehran), 25 February 2002 in FBIS-NES-2002-0225

<sup>28</sup> *Turkish Daily News* (Ankara), 22 August 1996 in FBIS-WEU-96-165

natural gas pipeline was completed 50% and the remaining Erzurum-Ankara line , which was planned to be completed by the end of 2000, could be extended to the first half of the year 2001.<sup>29</sup> On the Iranian side, Iranian state oil company said that they were ready to start. This brought the question of compensation because of the ‘take or pay’ condition of the 1996 agreement. Mohammed Nejad, Managing Director of Iranian national gas company, demanded compensation from Turkey. Nejad claimed that Iran made all the necessary preparations to supply gas to Turkey.<sup>30</sup> He argued that Iran had to pay back the loan from the bank for the financing of the pipeline and plants, and this was planned to be paid back with the income from export of gas to Turkey. However, Turkish Energy Minister, Cumhur Ersümer, claimed that Iran had neither completed the section of the pipeline from Tabriz to the Turkish border nor had it sufficient gas to sell to Turkey.<sup>31</sup>

As a result of negotiations between the delegations of the two sides , the beginning of the delivery of gas was delayed to 30 July 2001.<sup>32</sup> Iran accepted the reasons for the delay with understanding. Then the Turkish side announced that Turkey accepted to pay compensation to Iran, the amount of which was determined by the Turkish government, but no precise figure was explained to the public.<sup>33</sup> When the second deadline came, Turkey announced that it had already completed construction of the pipeline on its territory.<sup>34</sup> However, Turkey wanted to test all gauging system on the Bazargan border point on the

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<sup>29</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 29 April 1999 in FBIS-WEU-1999-0430

<sup>30</sup> IRNA (Tehran), 12 January 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0112

<sup>31</sup> *Tehran Times* (Tehran), 18 December 1999 in FBIS-NES-1999-1218

<sup>32</sup> Anatolia (Ankara), 14 January 2000 in FBIS-WEU-2000-0114

<sup>33</sup> IRNA (Tehran), 17 January 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0117

<sup>34</sup> IRNA (Tehran), 29 July 2001 in FBIS-NES-2001-0729

Iranian territory and Iran welcomed the Turkish request.<sup>35</sup> After the inspections of the system, Turkey accused a metering not being ready for operation.<sup>36</sup> Then a series of discussions and negotiations began again. Finally, Turkey announced in December 2001 that it became satisfied about the system in Iran and the first flow of gas began<sup>37</sup>, then in 22 January 2002 Iranian gas officially started flowing to Turkey.<sup>38</sup>

Iran behaved in a tolerant manner to Turkey during this process. Iran knew the pressure over Turkey from the US. This was an important case for Iran to overrun the embargo by the US and the motives for Iran to sell its gas to Turkey, which was explained above, all of which led Iran to be more tolerant to Turkey. The end of the problems and the start of the flowing of gas led the Turkish and Iranian sides to be more optimistic about the future of economic relations between the two countries. Turkish ambassador in Tehran, Selahattin Kalpar, stated in an interview with the *Tehran Times*: “The gas project between the two countries, apart from its economic benefits, illustrates the strategic and political considerations that both Tehran and Ankara have made their priorities. This shows how our nations can work together.”<sup>39</sup> Also, in 24 December 2001, Turkish State Minister, Mehmet Keçeciler, expressed Turkey’s readiness to sell Iranian natural gas to Europe.<sup>40</sup> This willingness closely overlapped with Iran’s desire to sell its gas to Europe over Turkish route and it was a signal of a further cooperation between Iran and Turkey. Keçeciler also referred to the

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<sup>35</sup> IRNA (Tehran), 30 July 2001 in FBIS-NES-2001-0730

<sup>36</sup> IRNA (Tehran), 10 November 2001 in FBIS-NES-1110

<sup>37</sup> *Turkish Daily News* (Ankara), 12 December 2001

<sup>38</sup> Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran Radio 1 (Tehran), 22 January 2002 in FBIS-NES-2002-0121

<sup>39</sup> *Tehran Times* (Tehran), 22 December 2001 in FBIS-NES-2001-1222

growing imbalance in the trade between the two countries in favor of Iran and pointed to the necessity to increase the exports of Turkey to Iran.

Then in January 2002, Turkish Deputy Minister for Development Affairs, Faruk Bal, paid a visit to Iran, aimed at preparing the ground for cooperation between Iran and Turkey in the domain of house building and reconstruction of the urban areas. In this visit, both Faruk Bal and Ali Abdolalizadeh, Iran's Minister of Housing and Urban Development, expressed their willingness to cooperate.<sup>41</sup>

Turkey's gas purchase from Iran was a good example showing the plurality of the factors effecting the cooperation between the two states. In order to make predictions about the future of relations, cooperation or conflict, the following determinants should carefully be analyzed.

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<sup>40</sup> Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran Radio 1 (Tehran), 22 January 2002 in FBIS-NES-2002-0121

<sup>41</sup> IRNA (Tehran), 15 January 2002 in FBIS-NES-2002-0115

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUDING REMARKS: OBSTACLES TO AND INCENTIVES FOR COOPERATION

#### 5.1. Obstacles to Cooperation

##### 5.1.1. The US Factor

Kissinger defines the nature of US-Iran relations as: “There are few nations in the world with which the US has less reason to quarrel or more compatible interests than Iran.”<sup>1</sup> Iran was one of the leading strategic allies of the US in the Middle East during the Cold War. However, the relations seriously worsened after the 1979 revolution of Iran. The new regime in Iran named the US ‘the Great Satan’, and called it the source of instability in the Middle East and the main enemy of the Muslims all over the world. The takeover of the US embassy in November 1979, the Iran-Contra Affair of 1986, and the Salman Rushdie Affair of 1989 were some of the events which further worsened the relations.<sup>2</sup> On the other side, the US support to Iraq at various points during the Iran-Iraq War (1981-1988) and the loss of 300 people on an Iranian air flight which was shot down in 1988 by the *USS Vincennes* were some other events which deepened Iranian antagonism towards the US.<sup>3</sup>

Both sides have the reasons of their own to define the other as a potential threat and enemy. On the US side, firstly the US accuses Iran of attempting to export the Islamic revolution to other Muslim countries, and

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* (New York: Simon&Schuster, 2001), p.196.

<sup>2</sup> For details of these events see Charles Kurzman, “Soft on Satan: Challenges for Iranian –US Relations” *Middle East Policy* 6, no.1. (1998): p.67-70.

accordingly of supporting the Islamic radicals and terrorists in the Middle East. Secondly, the US accuses Iran of being a major obstacle to the Middle East Peace Process, referring to its hostility to Israel. Maintenance of an independent and legitimate Israeli state has been one of the leading goals of the American policy in the Middle East.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Iran has regarded Israel, together with the US, as the source of conflicts in the Middle East. Iranian leaders explicitly state their anti-Israeli ideas.<sup>5</sup> As a result, Israeli factor constitutes an important obstacle to the US-Iran rapprochement. In addition to these, effective Israeli lobby in the US makes anti-Iranian propaganda, which leads to veto for any kind of a softer policy towards Iran.<sup>6</sup> Thirdly, the US claims that Iran is producing weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including nuclear weapons, and perceives this as an important threat to the regional stability and to its vital interests in the region.<sup>7</sup>

On the Iranian side, firstly, Iran regards the US military presence in the Persian Gulf as an indicator of the US imperialistic aims and perceives it as a threat towards not only Iran, but also all the Middle Eastern countries. Secondly, Iran sees the US as an important factor that led to the weakness of its economy. The US froze billions of dollars of Iranian assets during the 1979 revolution, and the US economic sanctions forbade significant foreign investments in Iran, and Iranian participation in big international projects.

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<sup>3</sup> Chas. W. Freeman in "Symposium: US Policy Towards Iran, Time for a Change?" *Middle East Policy* 8, no.1. (2001) : p.1.

<sup>4</sup> James A. Bill, "The Politics of Hegemony: The US and Iran" *Middle East Policy* 8, no.3. (2001) : p. 95.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 1.1. for instance

<sup>6</sup> Bill, p.95.

<sup>7</sup> Kissinger, p.196-7.

Thirdly, the conservative mullahs in Iran perceive the US cultural influence as the most threatening attribute of ‘the great arrogance’.<sup>8</sup>

The US regarded Iran and Iraq as potential threats to its vital interests in the Middle East, and followed the policy of dual containment, through which the US used its political, economic and military strength to contain and confront Iran and Iraq. Regarding Iran, the Iran-Libya sanctions of 1996 was a major obstacle for Iranian economy since it forbade foreign investments more than 40 million dollars in Iran. As previously mentioned in Chapter 3.1., this was the main obstacle to Iranian participation in the Central Asian energy projects. Regarding Turkish-Iranian relations, the US factor was the main source of delay in Turkish purchase of Iranian gas, and the cancellation of the Turkish-Iranian cooperation on the transportation of Turkmen gas through Iran and Turkey to Europe.

After 11 September<sup>9</sup>, the US became more sensitive on the issue of terrorism. Accordingly, it decided to follow a hard line policy against the states, which were accused of supporting terrorism. At that moment, Iran supported the US operation towards Afghanistan and this led to a relative softening in bilateral relations. Then, on December 2001, the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, stated that American experts advised him on the Iranian

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<sup>8</sup> Geoffrey Kemp, “Iran: Can the United States Do a Deal?” *The Washington Quarterly* 24, no.1 (2001) : p.112-113.

<sup>9</sup> In 11 September 2001, two towers of the World Trade Center in New York were bombed by the terrorists and hundreds of Americans were killed. Islamist terrorist group of Usame bin Laden was accused of the incident. After this, the US started a heavy campaign to destroy the terrorist organizations and the states which support them.

route for the transportation of Caspian mineral resources.<sup>10</sup> These events increased the hopes of those who favored US-Iran rapprochement<sup>11</sup>. Nevertheless, the events of 2002 disappointed these hopes. President Bush named Iran as a party of ‘evil axis’, accusing it of being one of the main countries supporting terrorism.<sup>12</sup> In these circumstances, it is difficult to foresee a significant change in US-Iran relations in the near future. Accordingly, the US policy of isolating Iran and the US sanctions remain an important obstacle to further Turkish-Iranian cooperation.

#### 5.1.2. Ideological Differences

The Islamic Republic of Iran is based on Islamic values, whereas the Turkish Republic is a secular and democratic country. In both countries, there are groups who are radical defenders of their respective regimes. These groups sometimes perceive foreign relations through ideological criteria and prejudices. Especially, during the conflictual periods between the two countries, these groups increase the tension with their statements and propaganda. Therefore, these groups constitute an obstacle to further cooperation between the two states.

In Turkey, there is an Atatürkist-secular elite, including the armed forces, the leading members of the media, and a significant number of politicians and bureaucrats. This group is highly sensitive about the preservation of the secularist regime, and perceives the Islamic Republic of

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<sup>10</sup> *Zaman* (Istanbul), 10 April 2001.

<sup>11</sup> The arguments of this group will be explained in the following parts, Chapter 5.6.



Iran as a potential threat to the regime. Both during the conflictual periods of Turkish-Iranian relations and the attempts to increase Turkish-Iranian cooperation, this group started a heavy campaign against Iran. After the assassinations of prominent Turkish academicians and journalists in the early 1990s, there were claims that these murders were Iran related. One of these murdered persons was Uğur Mumcu, and his funeral was a manifestation of the anger of secularists in Turkey towards Iran. An approximate number of 100 000 participants the funeral cried: ‘Mullahs go to Iran’, ‘Turkey will never be Iran’, and ‘Death to Sharia’.<sup>13</sup>

Turkish pro-Islamist Prime Minister, Necmettin Erbakan, followed a foreign policy to establish better ties with the Middle Eastern and Islamic countries, including Iran. This policy grew concern among this group. On August 1996, the Turkish army and security officials gave Erbakan a file warning about Iran and Turkish-Iranian rapprochement.<sup>14</sup> Erbakan’s insistence on this policy and moreover, his insistence on his radical Islamic approaches led to the post modern coup d’etat of 28th February 1997. The Turkish army exerted full pressure on Erbakan government and forced him to resign. Iranian envoy’s provocative speech in the Jerusalem Night in Sincan was an important factor which increased the concerns of the Turkish secularist elite. The Turkish army does not trust the Iranian administration. In an interview on August 2000, Turkish Chief of the General Staff, Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu stated that Iran did not

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<sup>12</sup> Sami Kohen, “Iran, Niçin Şimdi?” *Milliyet*, 6 February 2002 in FBIS-NES-2002-0207

<sup>13</sup> Nur B. Criss, “Arduous Diplomacy; Turkish- Iranian Relations (1979-1996)” (Unpublished Article, Bilkent University, 1996) :p.20.

<sup>14</sup> *IRNA* (Tehran), 21 May 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0521

maintain a sincere approach towards the security problems of the two countries.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, Turkish media started a heavy campaign against Iran during the assassination crisis of 2000.<sup>16</sup> Oktay Ekşi, the editor of *Hürriyet* daily, argued that Iran supported any form of activity that would stir up trouble in Turkey.<sup>17</sup> Another journalist in the same daily described Iranian people under the Islamic regime as having ‘embraced a snake as a savior’. He argued that the regime oppressed the Iranian people for exactly 21 years and Iranian people lost their personality, regardless of their long history and culture.<sup>18</sup> During the demonstrations in Iran in July 2000, Turkish Prime Minister, Bülent Ecevit, named Iranian government as an ‘oppressive regime’ and argued that the Iranian people could not be expected to bear the outdated regime of oppression further.<sup>19</sup>

Turan Moralı, Turkish ambassador in Tehran at that time, complains about attitude of Turkish media during this crises. He argues that there was misinformation in Turkish media. For example, Turkish media announced that Turkish Interior Minister, Sadettin Tanttan, transmitted a documentary file of 170 pages through the Turkish embassy in Tehran, including proofs of Iranian support to the PKK. Being the Turkish ambassador in Tehran at that time, he denied transmission of such a file. Additionally, he says that Turkish media

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<sup>15</sup> *Jomhuri-ye Eslami* (Tehran), 22 May 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0607

<sup>16</sup> For some examples see Şükrü Elekdağ, “İran’ın Elindeki Kan,” *Milliyet*, 17 January 2000; Emin Çölaşan, “Mektuplar,Tepkiler,” *Hürriyet*, 15 September 2001; Fatih Altaylı, “İran ve Türkiye”, *Hürriyet*, 25 Eylül 2001; Enis Beberoğlu, “Tahran İki Cami Arasında Beynamaz”, *Hürriyet*, 3 October 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Oktay Ekşi, “Gerçek Suçlu İran,” *Hürriyet*, 23 January 2000.

claimed that the congress of the PKK was summoned in Iran. However, he argues that the congress summoned in the caves on the areas of the Turkish-Iranian border, where there is not Iranian order. He argues that such misinformation unnecessarily increased the tension and tightened the relations between the two countries.<sup>20</sup>

On the other side, Iranian hard liners reacted against the anti-Iranian campaign in the Turkish media. They harshly criticized the secular regime in Turkey. Iranian media linked the assassinations of journalists in Turkey with the Zionist regime and Mossad. It was stated in Tehran IRNA on May 2000 that : ‘The propaganda was waged at the time when brother of one of the assassinated journalists accused Mossad of having a hand in the murder and said that current measures taken by Turkey were aimed at concealing the vicious attempts of Mossad.’<sup>21</sup> Ali Gilani, a columnist in *Jomhuri-ye Eslami*, accused the Turkish media of being financially supported by the Zionists: ‘During the last ten days the secularists’ media organizations, which make their living from the Zionists’ pockets, launched widespread propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran,...’ He claimed that the campaign aimed at preparing the ground for triggering clashes with the Islamic Republic of Iran.<sup>22</sup> Another journalist, A.Saleh, argued that each time the Turkish secular regime faced a

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<sup>18</sup> Tufan Türe , “Bu Fundemantalistlere Bir Ders Olsun,” *H rriyet*, 23 February 2000.

<sup>19</sup> *H rriyet* (Istanbul), 14 July 1999 in Olson, p.878.

<sup>20</sup> Turan Morali, “Turkey and Iran” The Institute of Foreign Policy, Ankara, March 2002

<sup>21</sup> *IRNA* (Tehran), 21 May 2000 in FBIS-NES-2000-0521

<sup>22</sup> Ali Gilani, “The Secularists’ Disgrace Following the Recent Arrests” *Jomhuri-ye Eslami*, 22 May 2000.

crisis, it referred to Iran as the big danger and set out to incite public opinion with nationalistic sentiments.<sup>23</sup>

Announcements of Turkish politicians, seriously criticizing the regime in Iran, increased the antagonism of this group towards the secular regime in Turkey. For example, Turkish Prime Minister, Bülent Ecevit, expressed on 17 May 2000 that Iran for years had provided shelter to separatist terrorists and was still trying to export its revolution.<sup>24</sup> Hamid Ziaiparvar, responded in *Moshad Khorasan* on 20 May 2000 :

Projection is a tactic that is widely used in politics. These days, we are seeing that some countries (such as Turkey, Libya and even Israel) blaming and projecting their internal problems on the Islamic republic of Iran. The Turkish Prime Minister has made accusations against the Islamic Republic of Iran... Zionist-influenced countries and media are inclined to attribute all terrorist attacks to the Islamic republic of Iran, in the hope of ruining Islam's global image while diverting attention from their internal problems.<sup>25</sup>

### 5.1.3. Clash of Interests

Some problems and rivalries of 1990s could be resolved but still remain as a potential source of competition and conflict in early 2002. The beginning of 1990s was a period of rivalry between the two countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia with their pan-Turkist and pan-Islamist policies. Nowadays, both

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<sup>23</sup> A.Saleh, "What is Turkey's Regime seeking" *Jomhuri-ye Eslami*, 29 May 2000

<sup>24</sup> *Hürriyet*(Istanbul), 17 May 2000 in Olson, p.885.

<sup>25</sup> Hamid Ziaiparvar, "Projecting Globally" *Mashhad Khorasan*, 20 May 2000

of them left such ideological strategies regarding the region. None of the sides could succeed in the bright and hopeful plans of the early 1990s. Each has successes and failures on certain aspects. Turkey was a better model for the newly independent states with its democratic, secular and westernized structure. Turkey established better cultural and educational ties with these states. Its private sector was more successful in their investments. However, Turkey's political and economic strength could not meet the expectations of these states to accept Turkey as a big brother and leader. On the Iranian side, Islamic approach was not well accepted in these states. Iran has an obvious geographical advantage for these states to open to the world markets. However, it could not participate in big projects of production and transportation of mineral resources of the region because of the US objection. Instead, Iran was successful in smaller projects with its swap formula and in railway transportation.

Nowadays, Iran wants to cooperate with Turkey to take a share in the projects of the transportation of mineral resources. Besides its willingness to cooperate with Iran on Iranian and Turkmen gas projects, Turkey is in a dilemma regarding the role of Iran in the region. On the one hand, Iranian owned gas reserves and its geographical advantage to transport Turkmen gas to Turkey constitutes an economic option for Turkey to solve its energy problem and to earn from the transportation of gas and oil. On the other hand, there is the US opposition to any act increasing the role of Iran in the region, which will damage the US policy of isolating Iran, and Turkey does not want to damage its vital interests regarding its strategic alliance with the US.

Additionally, Turkish policy makers may think that the increasing role of Iran will mean increasing Iranian domination over the NIS, which will decrease the Turkish influence over the region.

The lack of authority in northern Iraq, the potential threats from Syria, Greece and Iran, and the permission of Syria to Greece to use its airspace in a war with Turkey increased the insecurity of Turkey in the region in the beginning of the 1990s. Through its strategic cooperation with Israel, Turkey aimed at increasing its security towards these threats. However, Turkish-Israeli cooperation created new problems for Turkey. Iran is anxious about Israeli presence on Turkish border with Iran and its intelligence activities. Turkish officials' announcements that this cooperation did not aim at any third party are not enough to end Iranian concerns. Unless Turkey convinced Iran about the context of the agreements that they do not violate Iran's security, it would remain as a problem in the minds of Iranian decision-makers regarding their relations with Turkey.

There are a significant number of claims that Iran is working on a program of producing weapons of mass destruction and is trying to produce nuclear weapons. Despite the US objection, Russia continues its help Iran in its nuclear program. Additionally, the Iran missile program is perceived as a more concrete threat for Turkey. Iran is claimed to be working on Shahab-4 and Shahab-5 missiles which have ranges of 2000 and 5000 km. The production of these missiles will certainly be more threatening not only for Turkey but also for other countries in the region. This issue did not reach to a level of crisis

between the two countries, but remains as a potential source of instability in the region and in the bilateral relations of the two countries.

## **5.2. Incentives for Cooperation**

### **5.2.1. The End of Conflicts**

There were a number of issues in the 1990s which led to conflicts and rivalries between Turkey and Iran. By 2002, most of these issues ended, either solved by diplomatic ways through negotiations or fell off from the agenda.

The early and the late 1990s were dominated with assassination crises and Turkish accusations of Iran of exporting the Islamic regime to Turkey. The testimonies of the suspects in Turkey about the Iranian link of these assassinations and Iran's aim of establishing an Islamic regime in Turkey, combined with the harsh expressions of the politicians of both Turkey and Iran led to the crisis in bilateral relations. On the Iranian side, they claimed that Turkey supported the armed opposition organization of the Iranian regime (Mujaheddin-e Khalq Organization-MKO) through allowing its activities in Turkey. In response, Turkey accused Iran of killing member of the Iranian opposition in Turkey through its agents using diplomatic passports. The tension increased with the campaigns of the media of both countries. However, there was a change in Iran beginning with the presidents Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammed Khatemi about the policy of not exporting the revolution. Rafsanjani's 'pragmatic peace' and Khatemi's 'democratic peace' policies led

the Iranian government to establish better ties with its neighbors and to leave the policy of exporting the revolution. In fact, most of these activities were planned by the forces outside the control of the government, and especially Khatemi's government terminated their activities. On the other side, Turkey used this crisis for its internal struggle against reactionism and pressing Iran to cut off any kind of support to the PKK.

Border security problems and Iranian support of the PKK were other sources of tension between the two countries. In addition to the media and the politicians, it was the military in Turkey, which was highly sensitive on the issue. Turkey accused Iran of allowing the PKK to act freely on Iranian territory and to pass freely from the Iranian border to Turkish territory. Nowadays, with the capture of the leader of the PKK and the destruction of most of the military capabilities of the organization, the PKK issue is not the number one security problem of Turkey. As a result of a series of negotiations between the security committees of the two countries, there is now better control on the borders and both countries promised not to allow any kind of activities on their territory against the security of the other.

#### 5.2.2. Harmony of Interests

Turkey and Iran have some common interests, which make cooperation attractive for them. During the visit of Turkish President Süleyman Demirel on July 1994, the following areas for cooperation were negotiated: The transport of goods from Iran to Europe via Turkey and from Turkey to Asian countries



and the Persian Gulf via Iran; connecting the railways of the two countries; the construction of roads; strengthening ECO; the transmission of Turkmen gas from Iran to Turkey; and collaboration on security matters.<sup>26</sup> These are the summary of areas of cooperation on which both countries have common interests.

Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) can be a framework for the cooperation between the two countries and for larger cooperation projects among the other members. It was established in 1985 by Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, and was enlarged with the participation of Afghanistan and the newly independent Soviet republics (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan). ECO aimed at facilitating cooperation among member states and coordinate their regional activities in order to prevent unnecessary competition. The formation of alternative organizations as the Organization for Cooperation of Caspian Sea Countries, with the leadership of Iran, and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation with the leadership of Turkey, caused some confusion. For a better functioning of the organization as a framework of cooperation, the founding members should coordinate their efforts and interests, and set aside their independent plans.<sup>27</sup>

Under the framework of the organization, Turkey and Iran worked on interregional road and railway projects. They managed the railway project to put into practice. With the opening of Mashad-Saraks-Tejen railway on May

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<sup>26</sup> *Kayhan*, 26 July 1994 in Tschanguiz H. Pahlavan, "Turkish- Iranian Relations An Iranian View," in *Reluctant Neighbor*, ed. Henri J. Barkey (Washington, D.C. : United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996) :p.91

<sup>27</sup> Pahlavan, p.90.

1996, Iran linked its railway with Turkmenistan. There was an existing railway system among the Central Asian countries, therefore this meant linking not only with Turkmenistan but also with all the Central Asian countries. Then Turkey linked its domestic network with Iran in order to link with Central Asia. This meant the establishment of a network from Central Asia to Europe. Establishment of free trade zones can also be an attractive way to increase the trade between the two countries. Maku, an Iranian city near the borders of Turkey, Armenia and Nakhichevan is suggested to be an example for these zones.<sup>28</sup>

As previously mentioned, Turkey and Iran are an attractive routes for the transportation of Central Asian mineral resources to Europe and to the world markets. The two sides worked together with Turkmenistan on the project of transporting Turkmen gas via Iran and Turkey to Europe. Three parties reached a consensus on the project, but political considerations (the US veto) did not allow them to put this into practice.

Turkey is suffering from trade deficits in its foreign trade with Iran. Both sides at several times stated that the volume of trade between the two countries is far from the desired level. In the light of the projects on the areas of cooperation mentioned in the first paragraph, the volume of trade between Iran and Turkey can be increased, which will bring significant gains for each side. However, most necessary for this is the 'political will'.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.91.

### 5.2.3. Failure of the American Approach and Following the European Path

Nowadays, there are discussions within the US regarding the US policy towards Iran. On the one hand, there is a group favoring the continuation of the policy of isolating Iran. They argue that Iran continues its actions, like supporting terrorism and production of weapons of mass destruction, which damages the vital interests of the US. On the other hand, there is a group arguing that the US policy of isolating Iran failed. They argue that sanctions did not lead Iranians to soften on the Iranian hard liners; instead it intensified their antagonism and damaged the US companies' economic interests.<sup>29</sup> They refer to the common interests of the US and Iran on the issues of the Gulf security, Iraq and the Central Asia.<sup>30</sup> The end of the US-Iran conflict would lighten the US load for maintaining security in the Middle East, would loosen the growing ties between Russia and Iran, and would open the market for US firms.<sup>31</sup> Fuller and Kemp suggest that Iranian pragmatism may be a key factor in the rapprochement. Khomeini himself announced that the Iranian national interests took priority over Islam. If it can be shown that the US-Iran rapprochement is in the interests of Iran, Iranian pragmatism will fasten the establishment of closer relations.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See Symposium: "US Policy Towards Iran, Time for a Change?" *Middle East Policy* 8, no.1. (2001); Symposium: "The End of Dual Containment: Iraq, Iran and Smart Sanctions" *Middle East Policy* 8, no.3. (2001); James A. Bill, "The Politics of Hegemony: The US and Iran" *Middle East Policy* 8, no.3. (2001); Murray Eiland III, "Mixed Messages and Carpet Diplomacy: Opportunities for Détente with Iran," *Middle East Policy* 6, no.2. (1998).

<sup>30</sup> For details see Graham Fuller, "Repairing US-Iran Relations," *Middle East Policy* 6, no.2. (1998): p.143 and Kemp. P.109.

<sup>31</sup> Kemp, p.109.

<sup>32</sup> Fuller, p.142-143 and Kemp, p.123.

In his article, ‘The Politics of Hegemony: The US and Iran’, Bill explains the US policy towards Iran with the hegemon theory. He argues that the US became the one global hegemonic power after the collapse of the USSR, and lacked a mission in the absence of a clear powerful adversary. He continues his argument that then the global hegemon scanned the world for new threats and discovered a group of relatively independent regional hegemons, whose influence dominated particular regions of the world. These regional hegemons consistently resisted the pressure of the global hegemon. Then the global hegemon labeled them ‘rogue’ or ‘outlaw’ states. Iran was one of these regional hegemons of particular concern to the US.<sup>33</sup> Referring to the shared interests of Iran and the US, and the relative importance of both states in the international stage, Bill foresees a US-Iran détente as a natural development. However, he points to the necessity that the global hegemon needs to engage the regional hegemon as a sovereign independent member of the community of nations, and the regional hegemon, in turn, needs to eschew the use of extra-legal violence and soften harsh rhetoric.<sup>34</sup>

The Atlantic Council Report was prepared in the US by a group of 60 policy makers on the US-Iran relations. The report argues that the US sanctions and embargo failed to alter Iranian political behavior. It suggests the lifting of the sanctions, coordination of the US foreign policy with its European allies, improvement of relations through the use of commerce and trade, and cultural

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<sup>33</sup> Bill, p.91-92.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.97.

and educational engagement which can prepare the way for political engagement.<sup>35</sup>

Takeyh modeled the US-Iranian relations on Sino-American relations. The US and China disagree in some respects, but also have certain common objectives. Accordingly, they actively attempt to reach consensus on some of these issues. He argues that the US-Iran case is similar. They have certain objectives in common. He suggests that Iran and the US should move toward a new paradigm whereby they compete and cooperate at the same time.<sup>36</sup>

Kurzman criticizes the US policy towards Iran on three points. Firstly, the US government continues to provide fodder for the Iranian isolationists by making interventionist statements. Secondly, US policy experts continue to frame negotiations as a means of altering the policies of Iran or overthrowing it. He argues that negotiations have a better chance of succeeding if the US seeks only the benefits of trade and investment, rather than pursuing economic relations as a means to political ends. Thirdly, the US refused to negotiate with the hard liners. He suggests including them in the talks.<sup>37</sup>

Coming to Turkish-Iranian relations, in fact, Turkish security and economic calculations about Iran do not properly coincide with the US'. For example, preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear power is not Turkey's number one foreign policy priority. More significantly, there are economic

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p.89-91.

<sup>36</sup> Ray Takeyh in Symposium: "US Policy Towards Iran, Time for a Change?" *Middle East Policy* 8, no.1. (2001) : p.8.

<sup>37</sup> Kurzman, p.71.

incentives for Turkey to maintain its relations with Iran, one of its major trading partners in the region. Economic embargo against Iran meant the loss of \$250 million of Turkish exports to Iran and about \$700 million of imports from that country. Also, it deprives Turkey's eastern provinces of Agri, Hakkari and Van of a lucrative border trade with Iran of about \$27 million.<sup>38</sup> As previously mentioned in detail in Chapter 3.1, because of US objections, Turkey could not conclude a project with Iran and Turkmenistan on the transportation of Turkmen gas through a pipeline via Iran and Turkey to Europe, which would bring Turkey significant economic gains and increase its strategic importance.

During the hot debates of 1996 and 1997 in Turkey about Turkey's rapprochement with Iran, İlnur Çevik, the editor of *Turkish Daily News*, criticized the US policy towards Iran and its effects on Turkey. Çevik accused the US of following a double standard policy that it supports dictatorship in the Middle East and Latin America, while it isolates the Islamic regime in Iran.<sup>39</sup> Also, he criticized the US embargo and he argued that the US had no right to ask Turkey for a sacrifice, mentioning that Turkey had to establish economic ties with its neighbors in order to survive.<sup>40</sup>

Europeans disagree with the US policy of isolating Iran. Instead, they followed a policy called 'critical dialogue'. German Foreign Minister, Klaus

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<sup>38</sup> Mahmut B. Aykan, "Turkish Perspectives on Turkish-US Relations in Concerning Persian Gulf Security in the Post- Cold War Era: 1989-1995," *Middle East Journal* 50, no.3. (1996) : p.353-354.

<sup>39</sup> İlnur Çevik, "Is Iran the Only victim of American Double Standards," *Turkish Daily News*, 15 August 1996 in FBIS-WEU-96-161.

Kinkel, the principal architect of this policy, argued in 1992 that it was essential to move Iran toward responsible cooperation with Europe and the rest of the world through engaging it economically and diplomatically, rather than isolating it. Despite the interruptions in the relations because of the death fatwa on Salman Rushdie in 1989 and the decision of the Berlin Court on the Mykonos affair in 1997<sup>41</sup>, the Europeans did not entirely terminate their economic ties. The Europeans' emphasis on Iran's geostrategy makes it critical for peace and stability in the Persian Gulf. On the other hand, Europeans argue that the continuation of a critical dialogue would strengthen moderates in Iran, while the isolation of Iran will strengthen the conservatives.<sup>42</sup>

The isolationists in the US criticize Europeans for calculating short-term economic interests while ignoring security interests. They claim that a nuclear power terrorist Iran will in the long run be more threatening to Europe than to the US.<sup>43</sup> They argue that there is not a real change in Iran, since it still tries to export the revolution, aims at producing nuclear weapons and refuses official dialogue with the US.<sup>44</sup>

Under these circumstances, being a strategic ally of the US on the one hand and aiming to be a full member of the European Union on the other,

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<sup>40</sup> İlınur Çevik, "Suspicious of the West About Refah," *Turkish Daily News*, 14 August 1996 in FBIS-WEU-96-161.

<sup>41</sup> Rushdie Affair: Salman Rushdie is the author of the Satanic Verses, which ridiculed fundamental beliefs of Islam. Ayetollah Khomeini placed death sentence(fatwa) on Rushdie in 1989. Mykonos Affair: Four Iranian Kurdish dissidents were killed in Mykonos restaurant in Berlin on 17 September 1992 and the Berlin court ruled that the murders were ordered by the highest levels of the government in Iran.

<sup>42</sup> (Mahmood Monshipouri, "Iran's Search for the New Pragmatism" *Middle East Policy* 6, no.2. 1998) :p.104.

<sup>43</sup> Kissinger, p.201.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.200.

Turkey faces a dilemma in choosing which policy to follow. Turkish security elite chose the US approach in most of the cases till today. Broader security perceptions of Turkey prevailed over the regional ones and its economic interests. Nowadays, there is a growing tendency within Turkey that it should follow the European path in its relations with Iran. Bulent Aras, an academic foreign policy expert in Turkey, argues that Europe has a better foreign policy perception of the Middle East with its deeper historical experiences. He suggests Turkey to follow the European path, combined with the calculation of the global and regional realities and the necessary flexibility in foreign policy decision making.<sup>45</sup> Ferai Tinc, a columnist in *Hurriyet* daily, argues that Turkey will be located at the starting point of the trade route which is being established as a result of the closer relations between Iran and Europe. She claims that this will bring new opportunities to Turkey. She argues that the US approach marginalizes Iran, whereas the European line intends to draw Iran to a place where common values can be shared. She states that Turkey should choose to live with a peaceful neighbor by following the European path.<sup>46</sup>

Turkish President A.Necdet Sezer had decided not to attend the ECO summit in Tehran on June 2000. Two years later, Sezer paid a visit on June 2002 to Tehran together with a group of high-ranking officials and leading businessmen.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, the general secretary of the National Security Council, Tunçer Kılıç, suggested Turkey to follow a new comprehensive foreign policy including Iran and Russia, without ignoring the

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<sup>45</sup> Bülent Aras, “Türkiye ve İran: Yeni Dönem, Yeni Fırsatlar” *Zaman*, 19 June 2002

<sup>46</sup> Ferai Tinc, “İran’la Avrupa Yolunu İzlemek” *Hürriyet*, 10 September 2001

<sup>47</sup> Özgen Acar, “Sezer’in Tahran Seferi” *Cumhuriyet*, 11 June 2002.



US factor.<sup>48</sup> What made this statement more interesting was because it was spelled by the military wing, which was highly cautious about Turkey's relations with Iran and had several times accused Iran of working against the security of Turkey. These two events, combined with the growing arguments explained above, may be the indicators of the beginning of a reformulation of Turkish foreign policy towards Iran. However, it is difficult to make a prediction about the future, because these events are recent and their consequences are not yet clear.

**In conclusion**, this study shows that uncertain ground of Turkish-Iranian relation continues. However, the experiences of the 1990s and the early 2000s provided us to point the determinants for the future. In order to understand Turkish-Iranian relations, one should calculate multi-dimensions of the relations. A development in domestic politics can effect the regional dimension of the relations, while changes in the international system and its reflections on the region can change the foreign policy calculations of the two countries. As a result of an examination the relations after 1990, we can determine the obstacles to and the incentives for cooperation. The US remains the main obstacle to cooperation. Unless its perception of Iran as a rogue state change and it reformulates its policy of confronting and containing Iran, it will forbid its strategic partner, Turkey, to improve its relations with Iran. Additionally, ideological differences, which became concrete on the radical defenders of their regime within each side, is a potential source of increase of tension between the two countries. Finally, clash of interests constitute another

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<sup>48</sup> Emin Çölaşan, "Askerin Ağzından İran" *Hürriyet*, 9 March 2002

obstacle to cooperation. Turkish and Iranian desires to be more influential actors in the region lead them to compete. Rivalry in the Central Asia and the Caucasus, Turkey's strategic cooperation with Israel, and Iran's armament program are examples of this competition.

On the other hand, there are some incentives for cooperation. Firstly, the conflictual issues of the 1990s, such as Iran's exportation of its regime, border problems, Iran's support to the PKK and Turkey's support to the MKO has ended. They are mostly resolved or fell off from the agenda. Secondly, there is harmony of interests in Turkish-Iranian economic cooperation. There is a number of areas of cooperation such as transportation of goods, transmission of mineral resources and increasing the volume of trade. Thirdly, debate on the success of the US policy of Iran may lead a possible change in the US policy, which accordingly leads to dominant changes in the course of Turkish-Iranian relations. Also, alternative European policy of Iran will certainly increase the cooperation between the two countries.

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